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THE TIMES OF INDIA

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INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Robert Lewandowski's late goal for Barcelona against 10-man Atletico Madrid puts the team seven points clear after Real's loss to Mallorca, P 14

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IMD: Cooler temp next 2 days likely in northwest India

IMD said two western disturbances will affect northwest India this week, peaking on April 7-8, bringing rain, thunderstorms, lightning and lower day temperatures. Mercury may rise till April 6, fall on April 7-8, then rise again by April 9-11. Wet weather is also expected across central, eastern and peninsular India till April 9. IMD said day temperatures are likely to remain below normal to normal over most parts of India during the next seven days. **P 9**

Patient won't pay for hosp lapses: Consumer panel

Vadodara District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission recently directed New India Assurance Company Ltd to settle a claim filed by Indradutt Pandya, 63, saying a policyholder can't be penalised for registration and other lapses by a hospital. Pandya, insured since 2003, underwent cataract surgery in 2022 and sought reimbursement of ₹44,700. TNN

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Focus on RBI stand on growth, inflation

Reserve Bank of India is widely expected to hold rates in its April 8 monetary policy review meeting, but the real focus is on how it reads growth, inflation, and strain building in the system due to the West Asia war, oil prices and disrupted supply chains. **P 11**

Theft case: Judicial officer denied bail

A Patiala court denied anticipatory bail to a judicial officer accused of stealing gold, jewellery and cash from the house of an additional sessions judge, now deceased, noting the seriousness of allegations and need for custodial interrogation. **P 9**

Porcupine threat to Kashmir's saffron

Kashmir's famed saffron crop is facing a thorny problem: porcupines that eat the corms (bulb-like structures that produce the flower) beneath the soil, hollowing out harvests. Farmers report up to 80% damage to fields. **P 5**

US rescues airman stranded in Iran, may've lost 4-5 aircraft

We Got Him: Trump; No US Fatality In Op

Chidanand Rajghatta

Washington: In a high-risk, high-stakes operation deep inside Iran, the US military Sunday rescued a stranded airman at high cost, capping what American officials described as one of the most complex combat search-and-rescue (CSAR) missions in recent history. The op reportedly came at significant material cost, including two C-130 transport aircraft, two Black Hawk helicopters and an A-10 Warthog aircraft, but no loss of life on the American side.

FULL COVERAGE: P 7, 11, 12

President Donald Trump quickly moved to frame the mission as an unambiguous success, emphasising the recovery of the Air Force weapons systems officer (WSO) over the apparent loss of aircraft. "WE GOT HIM!" Trump declared in a social media post, hailing "one of the most daring Search and Rescue Operations in US History."

The operation was triggered after an F-15 strike aircraft was downed over Iran, forcing both the pilot and WSO to eject in mountainous terrain. While the pilot was recovered relatively quickly, the WSO, hiding in a ridge, evaded capture for nearly 48 hours, relying on survival, evasion, resistance, and escape (SERE) training. Iranian forces launched an intense manhunt, even offering rewards for his capture.

▶US doctrine, P 12

16 INDIAN SHIPS HAVE CROSSED HORMUZ

- **Green Asaha, 8th Indian ship carrying LPG,** crosses Strait of Hormuz. **16 Indian-flagged ships** are now west of the strait, including **Jag Vikram,** also loaded with cooking gas
- Nearly **8 lakh piped gas consumers** have been added over past month. An official says up to **80% of commercial LPG** demand is being met
- Remains of **sailor Dixit Solanki, killed in strike** on his vessel off Oman coast, repatriated. Family want **DNA test** before accepting body
- **OPEC+** agrees to further **raise oil output quotas** from May. Warns that repairing damaged energy facilities is **'both costly and takes a long time',** potentially hitting supplies well into future
- **Oman, Iran hold talks** on easing passage through Hormuz
- China, Russia foreign ministers talk, both ready to **'cooperate in easing tensions'**

Image released by Iran shows purported US aircraft destroyed during the mission to rescue the stranded US airman

Trump hurls expletives, threatens to strike power plants; Iran says 'our whole region will burn'

In a profanity-laced post, Donald Trump threatened to rain hellfire on Iran if it did not open the Hormuz Straits. "Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran... Open the F..... Strait, you crazy bastards..., Trump posted on Easter Sunday, while extending his deadline for Iran by another day. Iran's parliament speaker Qalibaf replied on X, saying "our whole region is going to burn because you insist on following Netanyahu's commands". **P 12**

Iran targets energy, power sites across Gulf

Damage was reported at civilian facilities in UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait, after Iran attacked critical energy and other infrastructure across the Gulf. Iranian drones caused "severe" damage to Kuwaiti oil and petrochemical facilities, two power generation units and water desalination plants, Kuwaiti officials said. In Abu Dhabi, officials said they were battling fires caused by falling debris at a petrochemical facility. **P 12**

Jaishankar talks to Iran, UAE, Qatar counterparts

External affairs minister S Jaishankar received a call from Iranian foreign minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi and discussed the West Asia situation, the minister said in post. In separate conversations with his counterparts from UAE, Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Jaishankar reviewed the rapidly evolving situation in the region. TNN

▶Chabahar work to expand faster after war: Envoy, P 7

Malda siege of judicial officers proof of jungle raj, says Modi in Bengal

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Kolkata: PM Narendra Modi cited Sunday the confinement of seven judicial officers on SIR duty in Malda district as proof of a collapsing law-and-order situation in Bengal, sharpening his attack on Trinamool Congress at a BJP election rally in Cooch Behar.

"Citizens across the country were shocked at how judicial officers were held hostage in Malda. What kind of govt is this, where even judges and constitutional authorities aren't safe? If they're not safe, how can ordinary people feel safe?" Modi said.

Calling the situation "a state of jungle raj", Modi said the situation had "deteriorated to such an extent that Supreme Court had to intervene". He said SIR of poll rolls is aimed to identify "illegal settlers".

▶'Protecting infiltrators', P 6

DANCE of DEMOCRACY

- **MAMA, MIYA** | There's more at stake for CM **Himanta** than a second stint as CM: His personal brand; a battle for the **perfume baron** | **P 8**
- Role of **500 judicial officers from Bengal** in voter roll work has **slowed down disposal of cases** in courts | **P 6**
- **Mother of RG Kar rape-murder victim sparks row** as BJP candidate after purported **video surfaces** in which threatens to **'throw Mamata into the gutter'**

Probe ordered into Hutti gold mines tendering row

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Bengaluru: In a serious embarrassment, Karnataka govt has ordered a probe into 2025 tendering irregularities at Hutti Gold Mines Co Ltd, the only active gold-producing unit in the country.

The secretary of the commerce and industries department ordered the probe in late Feb into the tendering process at HGML, owned by Karnataka govt. Its chairman JT Patil is a Congress MLA. Hutti mines are in Raichur district. Bids had been called for purchase of forged steel grinding balls, a basic component to grind materials into fine powders, essential for efficient processing and production.

Two key allegations under probe are: Tendering process was redefined midway through disqualifying bidders, and a second modification kept bidders from some countries out of the process.

Calling the controversy "not major", JT Patil told **TOI** that the tendering process is being set right.

▶Contentions raised, P 4

> The probe was ordered based on some changes made in the tender conditions by local officials. It is not a big problem. The technical committee has submitted its report. Based on it, we will take further action
> **J T Patil** | CONGRESS MLA & HUTTI GOLD MINES CHAIRMAN

No Brahmin in fray from major parties in TN

Chennai: For the first time in 35 years, AIADMK has not fielded any Brahmin candidate in Tamil Nadu assembly election, indicating the waning influence of the community which hasn't found place this time in the lists of other major parties as well, **reports Ram Sundaram.**

In about 10 years since the demise of chief minister J Jayalalithaa, a Brahmin, AIADMK had fielded one candidate from the community, R Nataraj, a retired DGP, in 2021 election.

Its ally BJP too has no Brahmin candidate in the 27 seats allotted to it, though the party has managed to get support of Tamil Nadu Brahmin Association (TAMBRAS). DMK and Congress have no Brahmin candidate either.

▶NTK fielded six, P 6

Zameer joins campaign; Patil stirs caste pot

Congress Sunday ironed out wrinkles in Davanagere bypoll, with housing minister Zameer Ahmad Khan—long absent from the poll turf — actively campaigning with colleague SS Mallikarjun for the latter's son Samarth Shamanur, candidate from the party stronghold. "We'll work together," the ministers said.

Senior minister MB Patil said All India Veerashaiva Mahasabha and Jagatika Lingayat Mahasabha were discussing the question of an independent religion status for Veerashaiva Lingayats and urged BJP state chief BY Vijayendra — who was on the dais at an event — to accept that the community is not part of the Hindu religious group. **P 4**

Women's rights & religion: CJI-led 9-J bench includes all faiths, and a woman

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New Delhi: Inspired by the thumb rule that "justice must not only be done, but must also be seen to be done", CJI Surya Kant has constituted a nine-judge bench, including judges from all faiths, and a woman, to decide the validity of contentious socio-religious norms that denote the centuries-old tussle of women's rights versus faith.

Since the socio-religious issues relate to the alleged circumscribing of rights of women to enter religious places, the CJI-led bench would include Justice B V Nagarathna, the lone woman judge in SC who would become first woman CJI next year, Justice M M Sundresh, Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, a Muslim, Justice Augustine G Masih, a Christian, Justice Prasanna B Varala, a Dalit and a ghazal enthusiast, Justice R Mahadevan, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice Aravind Kumar.

The nine-judge bench will commence hearing from April 7 on the contentious socio-legal-religious conflict between faith and fundamental rights that was triggered by its Sept 2018 judgment allowing entry of women of all ages into Sabarimala temple, which has customarily barred entry of females of menstruating age.

▶Review petitions, P 9

Petition filed in SC challenging trans law amendments

Less than a week after the controversial Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026, was notified as law, a writ petition has been filed before Supreme Court, challenging its constitutional validity. The petition has been filed by transgender rights activists Laxmi Narayan Tripathi and Zainab Patel. Tripathi and Patel were also lead petitioners in the landmark NALSA vs Union of India (2014) case, in which the apex court recognised the rights of transgender persons under the Constitution. **P 9**

RCB TIGHTEN GRIP AT HOME

Syed Asif

Tim David's late assault (70 off 25 balls) and his unbroken 99-run stand off 37 deliveries with skipper Rajat Patidar, who scored unbeaten 48, set the tone for defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru's 43-run win against Chennai Super Kings at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday. Ahead of the southern derby, **former Indian captains Anil Kumble and Rahul Dravid unveiled the bowling ends,** which were named after them in Feb | **P 13**

Project 'unsafe', pay ₹4cr to buyer: Rera to Chintels

Gurgaon: Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (Rera) has ordered Chintels India Pvt Ltd to pay over Rs 4 crore to a homebuyer in Chintels Paradiso, holding the developer liable for grave construction defects that left the project unsafe to live in, **reports Rao Jaswant Singh.**

The order follows successive audits after the Feb 10, 2022 collapse in Tower D that killed two residents and exposed severe structural failures across the complex.

The complaint was filed by Delhi resident Aruna Garg, who bought a 4BHK flat in Tower C and paid over Rs 1.8 crore, more than the agreed sale price.

▶Int'l standard, P 9

Four rescued UP kids flee moving vehicle in B'luru

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Bengaluru: Four children rescued from suspected child labour slipped out of a moving vehicle and vanished into traffic in central Bengaluru on April 2, raising concerns over safety protocols during child protection operations.

The children, aged between 13 and 16, had been picked up a day earlier from BMTC bus station in Majestic, following a tip-off. According to a complaint filed by BOSCO, a not-for-profit, the boys, all from a village in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, were allegedly brought to the city to work as painters by a man identified as Brijesh.

Rescue teams traced the children around 11.15am on April 1 and took them to a shelter facility in Gandhinagar. The next day, as per procedure, they were produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) for further directions.

▶Door wasn't secured, P 2

DOOR NOT LOCKED

- Four rescued children **open the back door and jump out of Mahindra Bolero after it slows down due to traffic.** Officials say all were school dropouts
- Initial probe findings point to negligence, **officials confirm that the rear door of the vehicle had not been secured**
- **Cops are scanning CCTV footage** from nearby areas, including roads and city railway station, to trace the children

72 hours on, 9 teams rescue 36-yr-old Kerala trekker from Kodagu forests

Rajendra G | TNN

Madikeri: More than 72 hours after she lost her way while descending Tadiandamol, the highest peak in Kodagu district, Kerala's GS Sharanya, 36, was traced to Pattighat reserve range Sunday.

Immediately after she got separated from other trekkers Thursday, Sharanya took shelter in an abandoned shack atop the peak. Since she wasn't confident of climbing down without assistance, she stayed put in the same region on Friday and Saturday, battling extreme weather, hunger, and uncertainties in a terrain home to wild animals.

She was found by tribal community members around 4pm Sunday. Virajpet MLA AS Ponnanna, legal adviser to the CM, told **TOI** that he rushed to Tadiandamol and interacted with Sharanya.

Police and govt sources said nine teams conducted the operation in close coordination, with foresters bringing in sophisticated thermal drone cameras to sharpen the search for the missing trekker.

▶Trekker unhurt, P 3

'NO FOOD, SLEEP FOR 3 DAYS, DIDN'T PANIC'

- **April 1, Wednesday** | Kozhikode resident **GS Sharanya, 36, arrives in Kodagu for 1-day trek**
- **Thursday** | **Leaves for Tadiandamol,** the highest peak in Kodagu district. **Sharanya goes missing** by evening and rescue op launched to locate her
- **Friday** | **Cops and forest dept jointly relaunch** the operation
- **Saturday** | Cops seek help from Anti-Naxal Force and dog squad. **Foresters use thermal drone cameras & tribals join** the operation
- **Sunday** | **Kudiya tribals help rescuers** locate Sharanya

> I went without sleep and food for three days. I wasn't scared, I did not panic. I lost my way while climbing down... I tried contacting forest helpline and colleagues from my office. But there was no network... I found a stream & decided to rest there. Friday, the sky was visible. I was looking for drones. I got drenched in heavy rain on Saturday & it was cold —**GS Sharanya**

Retd judge greets divorced daughter with band-baaja

Meerut: A retired judge here welcomed his daughter home with drums, garlands and sweets after her divorce, in a public show of support aimed at challenging the stigma surrounding marital separation, **reports Rahul Singh.**

Gyanendra Kumar Sharma celebrated the return of his only daughter, Pranita Vashistha, after a family court granted divorce on Saturday. Relatives welcomed her with garlands and distributed sweets. Many wore black T-shirts, saying, 'I love my daughter'.

A psychology postgraduate and finance director at a judicial academy in Tejgarhi, Pranita married an Army Major on Dec 19, 2018, her counsels Rajeev Giri and Naseeb Saifi said. The marriage soon turned sour, with allegations of mental and physical harassment. They had a son, and Pranita later sought legal separation. "If my daughter is unhappy, it is my responsibility to bring her out of that environment. Her dignity matters more than social expectations," Sharma said, adding that the family chose not to seek alimony.

Pranita Vashistha leaves court after the divorce Saturday

MP court allows married teen to live with man of her choice

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Bhopal: A 19-year-old married woman has received legal sanction to live "independently" with a man of her choice after she told MP high court's Gwalior bench that her husband — at 40, more than double her age — had been mistreating her and she didn't want to return to her parents because they, too, didn't wish her well.

The April 2 order by a division bench of Justices Anand Pathak and Pushpendra Yadav came on a habeas corpus plea from the woman's husband, who alleged that his wife was being held captive by a young man.

The woman testified in the presence of her husband, parents and the man she was living with that the latter gave her the independence she craved and there was no question of returning to those who were "not my well-wishers".

Asked where she wished to live in future, the woman said she wanted to be with the person accused of keeping her in confinement.

Govt advocate Anjali Gyanani, whom the court had deputed to counsel the woman in private, told the judges that she stuck to her stand of walking out of a marriage with a much older man after experiencing "discord rather than harmony".

The court also questioned the man with whom she had moved in. He acknowledged his feelings for her, said he wished to marry her after her divorce and gave an undertaking that he would care for her and "not be a source of harassment to her in any manner".

The HC order states that since the woman was an adult acting of her own volition, the habeas corpus petition had "outlived its purpose".

▶'Shourya Didi', P 9

'OF OWN VOLITION'

- Man claimed his wife was kept captive by another man
- She told court the man she was living with **gave her the independence she craved**
- HC questioned the youth, who **said he wished to marry** her after her divorce
- Court's order stated that the **woman was an adult** acting of her own volition

Bangalore Times

Did Hollywood just get its next war thriller?

'I've relied on the power of subtlety'

Buzzstop

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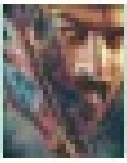

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Activity-hungry B'luru is witnessing a steady shift in how people access sport. Digital booking platforms are replacing one-off court bookings done over phone, encouraging regular participation across age groups

SWIPE. BOOK. PLAY A SPORT.

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On a busy weekday evening at one of Whitefield's dusty bylanes, multiple badminton courts hum at once inside a massive, unassuming shed. On one, a coach pushes a six-year-old to repeat a drill. In another court, a group of middle-aged friends rally more for laughter than points. Teenagers in another corner have paused mid-game to chat. A few courts away, younger children play with the intensity of future professionals. The differences in age, intent and ability are stark, yet the atmosphere feels oddly synchronous — a shared rhythm of movement, effort and escape.

FUN HOUR: For sports like football, fixed slots create consistency. In others, like swimming, convenience lowers the barrier to trying something new

Most frequently booked via apps
- Badminton
- Football
- Swimming
- Table Tennis
- Pickleball

Apps are driving a shift

Until recently, access to such spaces was largely informal. Users would first dial the court and verbally book a court for an hour or so. For those who manage sporting spaces, the biggest challenge has been whether such users would show up as committed. If they don't, it's a loss because the proprietor would've said 'no' to other bookings.

It's this uncertainty that some operators are trying to cash in on by pushing digital subscriptions and bundled access to sporting spaces — you book the space via an app, pay, play and leave, like the Whitefield badminton facility where players book courts online.

At a turf in Bengaluru south, operated by Tenzee Multisports, a group of young professionals gathers every week for football, some play every day. For one of them, Bhanutej Ravilla, 29, the hardest part is not the game itself, but getting everyone to show up. "Group and location... in that order," he says, while explaining what makes it work. At Tenzee, he is able to lock slots online. "It is changing behaviour," says Bhanutej.

"Since we all pay, it brings accountability... it shows seriousness," he adds, noting that without a confirmed booking, "people wouldn't show up."

Cancellations are rare, he adds, partly because platforms allow groups to fill in gaps if someone drops out. Over time, what starts as coordination settles into habit.

Across cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi -NCR, operators like Cult.fit's Cult Play, Machaxi and Game Theory are making investments in multi-sport spaces — mostly by taking up existing facilities on lease. While they have their own digital play, platforms like Zomato's District aggregate sports venues and enable one-off bookings.

HOW RECREATIONAL SPORTS IS CHANGING
- Play is becoming scheduled, not spontaneous
- Weekly bookings are replacing one-off games
- Subscriptions are growing over casual reservations
- Adults are making a return to sport after years

Their rise points to a clear and marked shift in how urban Indians are choosing to access sport.

For couple Manju and Kavitha, both aged 38, swimming began after they took their six-year-old daughter to a sport facility managed by Machaxi in Whitefield. Manju works at a technology company, while his wife is a lecturer. What began as a child's activity has turned into a family routine. "We don't have free time... we are making free time," they giggle and say together before dipping themselves back into the pool.

Proximity plays a decisive role, says Manju. Living about a kilometre away, the family now splits time between gym sessions and the pool.

Across these formats, the lines between flexibility and structure are blurring. Users may enter through one-off sessions or proximity-driven discovery, but often stay for the routine that follows. In some cases, as with football groups, fixed slots create consistency. In others, like swimming, convenience lowers the barrier to trying something new. And how easily access fits into rhythms of everyday life builds the routine.

Pros, coaches find it convenient

Somnath Sahoo's son Atharva, 10, ranks among the top badminton players in his age group in Karnataka and trains at Machaxi's centre in Whitefield. The decision to train there was initially modest, says Somnath. "We were just looking for a physical outlet," he says.

What began as a nearby convenience has turned into commitment, he says, thanks to the structured operations where you can find even a coach and check in for practise with zero wait time.

Coaches say these shifts are playing out at scale. Rakesh, a badminton coach who also oversees training operations at one of the centres, says the difference over the years is visible. "Players are much more disciplined now... they are not dependent on anyone for playing hours," he says.

The surge of regular sign-ins is not limited to children. "Many adults are just learning to play for the first time," he says, pointing to a new cohort of beginners.

Oishi Das, 28, a fintech employee in Bengaluru, once played badminton at the state level before dropping out due to frequent relocations. "Now, I play the sport twice a week," she says.

Adding repeat users

Platforms such as Zomato's District continue to draw users through discovery. Much of this engagement is driven by first-time exploration, even as repeat behaviour builds over time. "Repeat users account for nearly two-thirds of all reservations," says Rahul Ganjoo, CEO of District by Zomato, indicating that initial flexibility often translates into habit. Badminton accounts for nearly half of all bookings on the platform, with Bengaluru seeing among the highest conversion from discovery to play.

"Pickleball is growing faster than any other sport on the platform, with particularly strong uptake in Mumbai. Swimming and Table Tennis also show traction," Ganjoo adds.

Game Theory, which earlier allowed one-off court bookings, has also moved to a subscription-led model via its app. "Most people now are on a subscription and are joining games instead of booking courts," the company's founder Sudeep Kulkarni said.

Subscription models are intended to drive repeat usage and improve utilisation. "Somebody who comes for badminton is very likely to try swimming at some point," says Machaxi cofounder Pratish Raj. The company currently sees about 3.5 lakh monthly users across its centres.

At Cult.fit, recreational sports is still a small part of the overall portfolio. "We don't see big plans of expansion in play right now," says CEO Naresh Krishnaswamy.

Nomenclature of Bengaluru roads carries layers of memory and meaning. Here's one walkthrough

On Double Road, the city remembers Mysuru's 2nd CM

Chetan.Krishna @timesofindia.com

Bengaluru may have become notorious for its traffic in recent years, but did you know there was a time when it did not have a single road divider! The traffic density on major thoroughfares was so low that the authorities did not see a need for a grade separator.

But then the city grew, so did its traffic. Transport authorities decided to regulate traffic in the capital by installing dividers.

The first road in Bengaluru city to get a divider was

STREET VIEW

the wide stretch between Lalbagh North Gate and Mission road. This road soon became popular, obviously as Double Road!

In the 1970s, this stretch became KH Road, named after the then Mysuru state's second chief minister Kengal Hanumanthaiah, the man behind the construction of Bengaluru's iconic Vidhana Soudha.

It is said that Hanumanthaiah was inspired to build Vidhana Soudha after a Soviet delegation visiting the city spoke about Bengaluru not having a notable seat of power. The legislative house and council was temporarily being run from Attara Kacheri, which also housed the high court of Mysore.

Almost 5,000 workers were involved in the construction of the new structure, which began in 1952, and was completed by 1956. It is said that prisoners from the Central Jail, now Freedom Park, were involved in the construction and were released after completion.

The roundabout at the start of Double Road offers a great view of the rock formation inside Lalbagh, described as one of the oldest rocks on earth.

As you walk a little northwards, you will see the KSRTC headquarters, where you can see a bus imported from the United Kingdom. Fondly referred to as 'Banashankari', the cleanly restored bus used to originally ply between Majestic and Banashankari.

The bus, imported from the UK before India gained independence in 1947, was operated by the erstwhile Mysore Government Road Transport Department (MGRTD). Its body was built by Canada's Brond Ford Coach Body Limited, while the chassis is a Bedford and it is powered by a Perkins P6 engine.

A little further on the stretch is Bengaluru's second flyover built in 2001 to tackle increasing traffic, now popularly known as the Double Road flyover.

The Bedford bus, now called 'Banashankari'

BEST OF OORU

DANISH SAIT

Danish Sait is a comedian, actor, content creator and television host, best known for blending sharp satire with Bengaluru's everyday culture. Danish gets candid on his favourite city spots

GREEN SPACES

For a large part of my life, lakes and parks have been a staple — a kind of sanctity, a space of peace for me. The walk through beautiful tree cover is

something I've always loved. And now, with my son, parks have become even more important. I would say whichever park is closest, but Cubbon Park is one of my favourite places to be. I go there often with him so that he can play on the grass

HANGOUTS

One of my favourite places in the city is The Oberoi Bengaluru. It has one of the best buffet breakfasts in the city. It's a place we return to as a family. My favourite restaurants there is Wabi Sabi — I think they make some of the best Japanese food, and I really love Japanese food. My wife and I go there whenever we get rare time

off together, and many birthdays, anniversaries and special occasions have been spent there.

For a night out, I'd say Una or Bar Spirit Forward on Lavelle Road. They're among my favourite cocktail spots in the city. Bengaluru's cocktail culture is huge now, and these places stand out for their drinks and service.

And of course, home. My wife, who is an interior designer, has done a phenomenal job with it, and I love spending time there. It's my favourite place to unwind

A STADIUM

I can't leave out M Chinnaswamy Stadium because it has been such a major part of my life and career. From my apartment, I can actually see the lights of the stadium

and UB City, which was always something I wanted. I don't go there as often now because it gets too crowded, but it still means a lot. Every time I pass by, it reminds me of my journey and how deeply cricket in this city has shaped my life

TIMES CITY

Interactive moments thrill EARLY-MORNING CROWD

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For the second successive weekend, Bhartiya City turned into a lively community hub as residents gathered for Happy Streets, with Sunday's edition placing a clear focus on interactive partners and hands-on experiences.

Happy Streets by **The Times of India** is presented by Bhima Jewellers, with multiple community partners contributing to the weekly initiative. Among the key attractions, Reclaim Constitution engaged visitors by distributing copies of the Preamble and encouraging conversations around civic values. Prashree Art hosted Mandala art therapy sessions.

Pics: Chethan Shivakumar

UNLIMITED FUN: Happy Streets at Bhartiya City drew crowds for a second weekend, blending fitness, art, and interactive activities with strong community participation

Fitness and movement remained central to the event. Yoga sessions by Sarvebhavanthu Sukhinah Yoga and meditation activities by Heartfulness added a wellness dimension. Cultural and performance segments featured prominently. A karate showcase by Ryu Senshi-A Temple of Martial Arts drew crowds, alongside dance and music activities led by Swingers Dance Inc, From Mug to Mic, Mic & Melody, Jatin Academy of Dance, Krishnam Performing Arts Academy, and The Hustle Dance Academy. A stall by the Postcrossing Welfare Society of India stood out for promoting postcard writing and philately.

BHIMA presents HAPPY streets OUR ROADS. OUR WAY.

Officials: Rear door of vehicle wasn't secured

▶ Continued from page 1

Officials said the children, along with three others rescued in similar circumstances, were transported in a Mahindra Bolero (KA-17-P-4135) to appear before the committee around 11am. A doctor and staff members accompanied them. Following the hearing, the team began transporting the children back to the shelter home later in the afternoon.

The escape occurred at about 2.05pm near an Urdu school on the Mysore Road down ramp along Dr TCM Royan Road. With traffic congestion slowing the vehicle to a crawl, the four boys, seated at the rear, managed to open the back door and jump out. "They took advantage of the slow-moving traffic and ran towards a side road behind the school. By the time staff realised what had happened and gave chase, the children had already dispersed and could not be located," a police officer said.

Initial findings point to negligence, with officials confirming that the rear door of the vehicle had not been secured. The incident has also drawn attention to the city's persistent traffic bottlenecks, which inadvertently created the conditions for the escape. A case has been registered under Section 137(2) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for kidnapping at Cottonpet police station. Investigators are scanning CCTV footage from nearby areas, including roads around the school and the KSR Bengaluru City Railway Station, to trace the kids,

Police have also contacted the father of one of the boys, who works as a labourer in Bengaluru, to check if the kids have attempted to return home. So far, there has been no contact. Officials said all four children are school dropouts and may have travelled voluntarily in search of work.

ALMANAC (6.4.2026)

Meena Masa 23 Shri Parabhava Nama Samvatsara – Uttarayana – Vasantha Ritu - Tithi: Chaitra Krishna Chaturthi h. 14-11 Nakshatra: Anuradha h. 26-57 Yoga: Siddhi (Asrik) h. 15-25. 17 Shawwal

Rahu Kalam 7.30am — 9am

— KL Vidya Shankara Somayaji

IOC ramps up auto LPG supply, urges drivers to switch to petrol

Times News Network

Muthu P

LONG WAIT TO FUEL UP

Bengaluru: Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), reiterating that it has increased LPG supply in Bengaluru, on Sunday also urged auto drivers to temporarily switch to petrol, noting that nearly 70% of the city's autorickshaw fleet is equipped with dual-fuel capability.

"The long queues outside our filling stations are because we have not stopped supply. Also, our rates are cheaper than whatever is being sold at private stations," an official said.

According to IOC, auto LPG is currently being sold at Rs 89.5 per litre at PSU outlets in Bengaluru, compared to Rs 99-105 per litre at private stations. This price gap, coupled with the shutdown of a large number of private outlets, has pushed more customers towards public sector pumps. Officials said nearly 80% of over 300 private auto LPG dispensing stations in Karnataka are non-operational due to geopolitical disruptions, leaving PSU-run stations to absorb the bulk of the demand. "To bridge the gap, IOC has increased its average daily supply from 43.5 metric tonnes in Feb to 59.5 MT in March, and further to 68.5 MT from April 4," a statement issued here read.

However, officials acknowledged that infrastructure constraints, including limited dispensing stations and capacity, are making it difficult to fully meet the demand. IOC said drivers in areas facing long wait times may switch to petrol to maintain operations, adding that such shifts have already been observed in towns like Puttur where there are fewer supply points.

Silk Board Junction to get elevated Metro walkway

Times News Network

AI

LINKING YELLOW & BLUE

- First travelator in Namma Metro
- Approximately 250 metres long
- **Expected work duration:** 9 months

Estimated cost ₹59 cr

Bengaluru: Silk Board Junction will soon have an elevated walkway connecting its Yellow and Blue Line Metro stations. Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) Sunday floated a tender for the walkway's civil and finishing works.

Estimated to cost around Rs 59 crore, the walkway will also include a travelator — the first of its kind within the city's Metro network. Travelator, a common sight at airports, is a slow-moving, conveyor-style pedestrian platform designed to transport people over short-to-medium distances in transit hubs.

The walkway, estimated to be around 250 metres long, will connect the already operational Metro station in the Yellow Line, which connects Bommasandra to RV Road, with the upcoming Blue Line, which passes through the Outer Ring Road. The contract will include civil, structural works, and architectural finishing work to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the walkway.

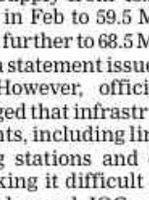
Unlike other interchange stations in the city, such as Majestic, Rashtreeya Vidyalaya Road, and MG Road, Silk Board will not have a direct transition between lines, making the need for the walkway inevitable. The upcoming station on the Blue Line, slated for completion in Dec 2026, will also connect to Kempegowda International Airport in 2027. "Land acquisition for the project is ongoing. Once the bidding period is over, it will take at least one or two months to select the eligible bidder. Only the tender has been floated; technical specifications are yet to be figured out," a BMRCL official said.

According to the Metro operator, the works are expected to be completed within nine months from when the contract is awarded. With an earnest money deposit (EMD) of Rs 58 lakh, interested parties have been given time till May 5 to submit bids.

Man held after govt official alleges rape

Bengaluru: A 42-year-old central govt employee has alleged that a 51-year-old man raped, assaulted, harassed, and extorted her over several years, recording videos of the abuse to blackmail her.

Based on her complaint, the accused, **Kriplani M** of Indiranagar, has been arrested and remanded in judicial custody. The woman,

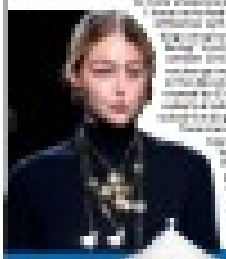


employed at Kempegowda International Airport, said she met him after he promised marriage. She alleged repeated rape and assault between 2019 and 2023. Police said the accused, known for filing complaints against officials since 2008, claimed links with senior officers and threatened the woman and her mother with false cases. He allegedly recorded private videos, demanded up to Rs 18 lakh, and seized her ID cards.

She filed a complaint in Dec 2025. The accused also filed a false habeas corpus plea, attracting a Rs 2 lakh fine. He later assaulted cops during a medical exam. TNN

WHAT'S #TRENDING AND WHY

Gigi Hadid breaks silence on being mentioned in Epstein files

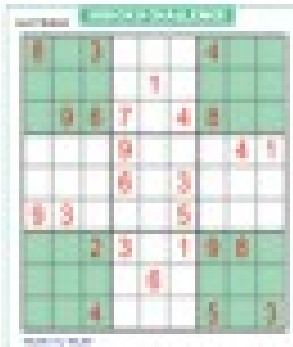


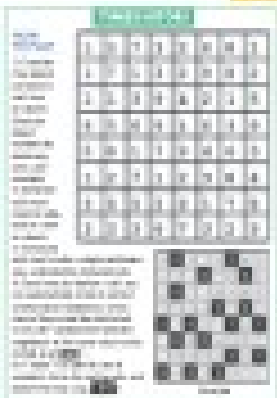
After claims dismissed, Lively vows to 'tell her story at trial'

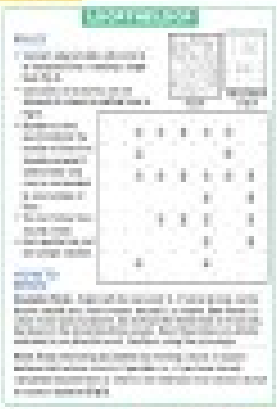
In cleaning up our email IDs, we may be editing out the real us

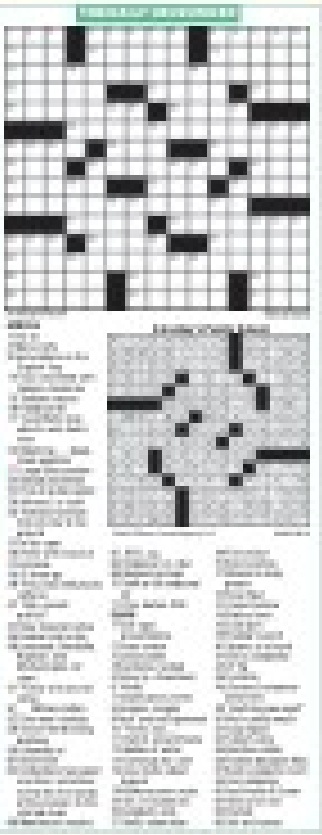
POV

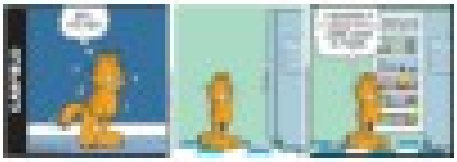
LEISURE

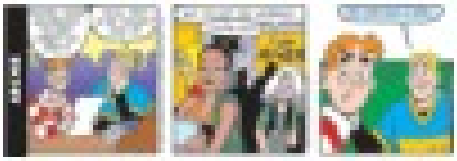


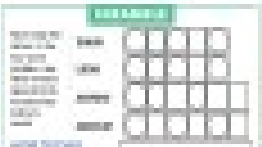


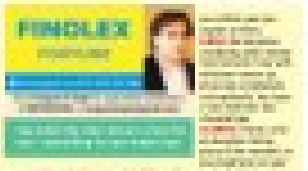


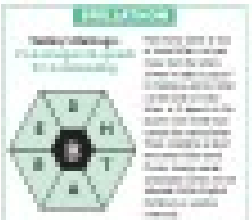


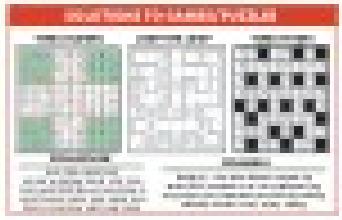












Curriculum revamp helps ICAR institutions debut in QS Rankings 2026

Initiatives under ISARP play key role in strengthening research ecosystems across institutions, claim academicians

Attracting foreign learners to India needs significant campus investments

CII Surya Kant graces Ramaiah International Meet & ADR Conference 2026

Student innovators receive Rs 30 lakh for projects approved in MSME Ideathon 5.0

From IBCs to WACE in schools, Australia deepens education collaboration with India

Taxes & fines: Out-of-state vehicles bring in ₹62.4 cr for K'taka in 5 years

B'luru Division Accounted For ₹54.6 Crore

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The transport department has recovered more than Rs 62.4 crore in taxes and penalties over the past five years from vehicles registered outside the state but plying locally without paying taxes.

A major share of the collections came from Bengaluru division, which accounted for nearly Rs 54.6 crore through enforcement drives.

Data from the department shows that cases were booked against 773 two-wheeler owners and 4,504 car owners across Karnataka for tax evasion. Bengaluru accounted for the bulk of the violations — 85% — with 747 two-wheelers and 3,739 cars booked, underscoring the scale of non-compliance in the city.

A senior transport official said: "There are several instances of vehicle owners registering high-end cars in other states where tax rates are lower, and then bringing them to Karnataka for prolonged use. Many do this despite having residence or business establishments in the state, with the intention to avoid paying tax."

"... In other cases, owners fail to re-register vehicles in Karnataka even after obtaining a no-objection certificate from the original state and continue to use them for years. We have also seen instances of people purchasing used high-end cars from Delhi, Kerala and other states but delaying registration in Karnataka," the official added.

Over the years, the department has intensified enforcement drives to identify such violations. In 2021-22, cases were booked against 232 two-wheeler owners and 424 car owners, of which 226 two-wheelers and 395 cars were from Bengaluru division.

The numbers saw a sharp rise in 2025-26, with 164 cases booked against two-wheelers and 2,278 against car owners. Of these, 158 two-wheelers and 1,746 cars were from Bengaluru alone. During the fiscal, the department collected nearly Rs 41.4 crore in taxes and penalties, with Rs 34.5 crore coming from Bengaluru division.

Following the launch of the five guarantee schemes in 2023, the state has set higher revenue targets for the transport department, prompting RTOs to step up enforcement alongside regular tax collection.

For the current year, the department has a revenue target of Rs 15,550 crore. Karnataka has 67 RTOs and ARTOs.

TAX RULES GO FOR A RIDE

Division	Two-wheelers	Cars	Tax & penalty collected (in ₹ cr)
Bengaluru	747	3,739	54.6
Bengaluru Rural	3	20	1.8L
Mysuru	9	213	2
Shivamogga	5	52	48.8L
Belagavi	8	239	1.8
Kalaburagi	1	241	3.3
Total	**773**	**4,504**	**6.4**

Source: Transport dept | Figures from 2021 to 2026

"In some cases, owners fail to re-register vehicles in Karnataka even after obtaining a no-objection certificate from the original state and continue to use them for years
—A senior transport official

Pic for representation

NO MORE GETTING AWAY: According to officials, vehicle owners register high-end cars in other states where tax rates are lower, and then bring them to Karnataka for prolonged use

Teachers to govt: Exempt us from census burden

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: With the census process resuming, govt school and PU college teachers in Karnataka say they are under strain, juggling academic responsibilities alongside enumeration duties. Teachers' associations have urged the govt to exempt them from census work.

ADDITIONAL WORKLOAD

The state has begun preparations, with training for census under way. Master trainers were trained in March, while enumerators are being trained in three phases. The first phase was held from April 1 to 3, and the second phase began on April 4. Teachers, however, say the timing clashes with a packed academic calendar. The department of school education has directed PU lecturers to conduct online classes from April 1 to 20 for students preparing for Common Entrance Test (CET), with around 25,000 students attending.

"Moreover, the II PU results are expected on April 7 or 8. Following this, revaluations will begin. Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) will conduct CET 2026 on April 23 and 24. The II PU exam-2 will be held from April 25 to May 8 as per the already fixed schedule," Ningegowda AH, president of Karnataka State Pre-University College Lecturers' Association, said. "...The National Testing Agency will conduct NEET 2026 on May 3. Only PU college lecturers will be deputed for all these tasks. We are under a heavy workload and the govt should exempt us from the census work," he added. The association has submitted a petition to the school education department and GBA.

Primary school teachers have raised similar concerns. Chandrashekara Nuggali, president of the Govt Primary School Teachers' Association, said a request to exempt teachers aged 50 and above was rejected. "We are requesting them reconsider this case. Many teachers above 50 live with health issues," he said.

High school teachers are also preparing for SSLC evaluation work. The SSLC exams concluded on April 2, and around 70,000 teachers are expected to begin evaluation work from April 8. "We are torn between various responsibilities. Our primary duty is to teach and we should be allowed to do that properly. What is the point of lamenting that our children are not learning anything if we are earmarked for other responsibilities?" a high school teacher asked.

Corporations ramp up training & deployment

Bengaluru: Bengaluru South and Central city corporations have stepped up preparations for Census 2027, focusing on extensive staff training, structured supervision, and coordinated execution ahead of the first phase of the exercise, scheduled from April 16 to May 15.

The first phase of the census, including house listing and housing census, began on April 1 and will continue up to Sept. Households can submit details online in 10-15 minutes through self-enumeration from April 1 to April 15 at **se.census.gov.in**.

Corporations have made training attendance mandatory, warning of strict action against absentee staff, including criminal cases, FIRs and suspension. TNN

B'luru-Delhi flight gets hoax bomb threat, sparks panic

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Panic gripped 183 passengers, crew members, and airport authorities at Kempegowda International Airport Saturday evening after a bomb threat was reported on a Bengaluru–Delhi flight. The threat was later declared a hoax.

IndiGo flight 6E-870 had completed boarding and was about to depart when the incident occurred.

Around 7.50pm, a passenger seated in 26D found the word "bomb" written on a tissue in the lavatory and alerted the cabin crew. The flight was halted immediately, and emergency protocols were triggered. The Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC) was activated, and all passengers were evacuated. Security teams conducted a thorough search according to the standard operating procedures.

After detailed checks, officials confirmed there was no threat. The flight was delayed by nearly two hours before departing. Police suspect mischief by a passenger and have launched an investigation.

Truck driver, 26, booked for drunk driving found dead in parked vehicle

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A 26-year-old truck driver allegedly died by suicide inside his vehicle hours after being booked for drunk driving Saturday night.

CRIME FILE

The deceased — Shanmugam, a native of Tamil Nadu — was intercepted by JP Nagar traffic police during a routine check around 11.20pm in JP Nagar. An alcometer test showed his blood alcohol level was at 97mg/100ml, well above the permissible limit. He was also unable to produce vehicle documents, including his driver's licence. Officials issued a notice, seized the 12-wheeler truck (TN-52-D-2590), and parked it about 100 metres near police station. According to police, Shanmugam later returned to the parked vehicle and allegedly hanged himself using a rope meant for securing goods.

The incident came to light at 8.05am Sunday when a passerby noticed the driver hanging on the outside of the cabin.

A senior officer said Shanmugam had spoken to the vehicle owner after being stopped, but was allegedly told to pay the fine and secure the vehicle's release through due process. Police said he had also approached them seeking release of the truck but was informed that it could only be done via court procedures.

Gambling raid: 19 arrested, ₹9L seized

TOI

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

Ranganath K | TNN

Police arrested 19 persons and seized over Rs 9 lakh in stake money during a raid on an illegal gambling operation at Tholapalli village in Chikkaballapura district on Friday evening.

A team led by circle inspector M Srinivas and PSI Ganesh of Chelur police station raided the tank bund area, where around 21 people were found allegedly playing gambling games, including the banned 'Andhar Bahar'.

Police said several of the accused had travelled from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh to participate. On spotting police, two individuals fled the scene, abandoning their belongings. Following a mahazar, officers took 19 persons into custody and seized cash, 15 mobile phones and two two-wheelers.

6 obstruct woman SI on patrol, land in soup

Six people were booked for allegedly obstructing a woman SI Nagamma, during a late-night patrol in Chintamani, Kolar district, Saturday.

According to police, the SI noticed a hotel operating past midnight near a petrol bunk at Channasandra on the Chintamani–Bengaluru road. Following her instructions, police jeep driver, Venugopal, asked the owner to close the hotel. While the owner was complying, a group of customers intervened and allegedly attempted to assault the driver. As tensions rose, SI Nagamma tried to record the incident on her phone. The group reportedly pushed her and prevented her from filming. TNN

Kerala trekker is healthy and unhurt, taken to homestay

▶ Continued from page 1

Kodagu superintendent of police Bindu Mani told **TOI** that Sharanya, who works for an IT company in Kochi and had booked a one-day trek as a solo traveller, has been successfully found. The woman from Nadapuram of Kozhikode is healthy and unhurt, police said.

Sharanya was taken to Virajpet hospital before being driven to a homestay at Kakkabe, about one-hour drive from Madikeri.

Police said the team included Kudiya tribals, who helped in tracing her in the hilly terrain. She reportedly faced problems due to a patchy mobile network and this was worsened with her cellphone battery prematurely running out of charge.

TOI

LOST & FOUND: Sharanya faced issues due to poor network and dead phone battery

Group returned safely while Sharanya got lost

Sources said Sharanya travelled from Kerala to Kodagu on April 1. She stayed at a homestay in Yavakapady village in Kodagu district. She went with a group of 15 trekkers on Thursday.

While the group returned to the base safely the same evening, the solo traveller had not been accounted for by the end of the day, forcing authorities to launch a search operation on Thursday evening, Due to enveloping darkness, the operation was suspended within hours.

On Friday, the search operation was widened to include foresters, cops, locals and tribal community members. The Kodagu district cops also sought help from Anti-Naxal Force familiar with rugged terrains. Saturday, the teams intensified the search, but failed to achieve a breakthrough.

On Sunday, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah directed officials to use additional resources to locate Sharanya and bring her back safely. Forest minister Eshwar Khandre, too, asked the foresters to scale up the operation.

Karnataka to get new food parks in S'mogga, Vijayapura

Vindhya.Pabolu
@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Karnataka is set to add two new food parks in Shivamogga and Vijayapura, with detailed project reports (DPRs) expected to be finalised in the next 10–15 days, officials from the Food Karnataka limited said.

The proposed park in Shivamogga will come up on 87.6 acres, while the one in Vijayapura will span around 75 acres

The proposed park in Shivamogga will come up on 87.6 acres, while the one in Vijayapura will span around 75 acres. Officials further said the DPR is being prepared for financial concurrence and are looking for funding under the Nabard food processing fund. The move is a result of the state's programme to set up a food park in each district when it was first announced back in 2022. Officials said the delay is due to lack of land allotment by KIADB and the agriculture department.

A senior official from Food Karnataka Limited said: "We are planning these parks based on local demand and availability of raw materials in the region, with units such as cold storage for fruits and vegetables, milk packaging, bakery units and wine-related processing being considered." He added, "Other challenges will be addressed by ensuring plots are used only for agro-processing. The project was earlier proposed near Bengaluru but could not be taken forward due to non-availability of land."

Karnataka currently has eight food parks, of which five are operational. In Malur (87 acres), 22 units have been allotted, but only 14 are running, Bagalkot (100 acres) has 18 units, with just six operational, Hiriyur (106+ acres) hosts eight running units, and Jewargi (105 acres) has seven units functioning. Among mega food parks, India Food Park in Tumakuru (110 acres) is functional to its maximum, while Favorich Mega Food Park in Mandya (60 acres) is still under construction.

For sale
Ready-to-move-in apartments in Bengaluru

Location	Project	Configurations
Hermit Colony	Lake Palazzo	2 BHK
Domlur	Natasha Golf View	1 BHK

- Located in prime neighbourhoods
- Owned by a renowned private sector bank
- Last day to submit the bid: Wednesday, April 29, 2026

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WHEN MARKETS TILT, BONDS BALANCE.
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Which stories should your focus be on?
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Yoghurt coffee, espresso bombs

Coffee, but make it viral

Espresso bomb coffee

Yoghurt coffee

'Throw yourself into experiences without the fear of failure'

Vasu Mockey, Nandita Das and Anandibai Ney engaged in a candid conversation about identity and change at the Bengaluru Art Weekend

"Throughout I kept on hearing about how languages, color schemes, what shade goes with what colour. 'How can you use this choice, history itself really dictates you especially as a woman — that causes a lot of inhibition in the first round of conditioning."

"The language may change, the strategy may change, the medium may change, but the processes of producing remains the same."

"Social media is a tool — it has its good and bad. But algorithms amplify what you engage with. You're told what to expect to jump from one thought to another so quickly."

'It is racing ahead—and we are not prepared'

Bengaluru sang, danced and cried with Paresh Pahuja at his concert

GALLERY

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The AI Factory explained

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20	160	3.44EF	1.68EF	28.8TB	38.6TB/S	6TH	CUDA	NEMO	15X
DGX B200 Nodes	Blackwell B200 GPUS	AI Compute FP8 Training	FP4 Inference Rooftop	HBM3E GPU Memory	NVLink Bandwidth/GPU	GEN Tensor Cores FP8	Full Stack Hybrid - FP	(Middle AI Enterprise	Faster Than Prior DGX H100

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NAAC A+

BAGALKOT AND DAVANAGERE SOUTH GEAR UP FOR APRIL 9 BATTLE; SENIORS BURY THEIR HATCHET; CANDIDATES STEP UP CAMPAIGN

Discord over? Zameer rubs shoulders with Mallikarjun

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Davanagere: Housing minister Zameer Ahmad Khan and his mines and geology counterpart SS Mallikarjun displayed unity Sunday by campaigning together for Congress candidate and latter's son Samarth Shamanur.

Days after his conspicuous absence from campaigning in Davangere, where Zameer had tried to win the ticket for the Muslim community, the housing minister arrived directly from Kerala at Mallikarjun's house and held a joint press conference.

"We have forgotten the past grievances. We will work together for the party's benefit," the ministers announced.

Zameer said Congress had appointed him as a star campaigner for the Kerala assembly elections and also given him the responsibility of 10 districts, where he was involved in hectic poll duty since March 26.

"Following CM Siddaramaiah's instructions, I have come to campaign for the party's candidate Samarth Shamanur. When I visited Davangere a few months ago, there was a demand from the Muslim community for a by-election ticket. I had assured them that I would bring it to the high command's attention. This indeed created confusion. It's true that some are dissatisfied because the ticket slipped away," Zameer said. Khan said there were still four days left for voting and that they will set everything right.

"The community has now sought an opportunity in the 2028 general elections. We are a Congress family. We will persuade the discontented legislative council member, Abdul Jabbar," Zameer said. The minister said there were 13 Muslim candidates in the 2023 elections, including those of SDPI, JD(S), and independents, in the Davanagere South constituency, and the combined votes did not exceed 3,000.

"Not all who contest will secure votes. Nevertheless, I will attempt to persuade the Muslim candidates now in the fray to give up. This is a Congress stronghold, and Samarth's victory is certain," he added.

Surjewala optimistic about Congress win

With Congress banking on the state govt's five guarantee schemes to secure its victory in Davanagere South in the April 9 byelection, party general secretary in charge of Karnataka, Randeep Singh Surjewala, expressed optimism about the poll outcome despite concerns over a possible split in the Muslim vote.

Asked about a potential vote split, he said, "The results will tell you."

He also criticised BJP legislators and parliamentarians for being "anti-Karnataka", noting that several irrigation projects are still awaiting approval from the Centre led by that party. Surjewala side-stepped the IPL ticket controversy over legislators seeking free passes, saying, "I don't watch it."

Responding to Union minister Pralhad Joshi's criticism of Karnataka's electric vehicle (EV) policy, Surjewala said, "It was amended in this budget as most of the benefits were withdrawn. The BJP-led govt is trying to push E20 petrol, for which our vehicles are not ready. Profiteering motives are involved. Currently, even E10 is causing problems," he said, questioning the Centre's ethanol push. TNN

TOI

Zameer Ahmad and I are friends. We speak informally. There is no difference between us

SS Mallikarjun | MINISTER OF MINES & GEOLOGY

BONHOMIE: Ministers Zameer Ahmad Khan (R) & SS Mallikarjun in Davanagere

Siddaramaiah says delimitation helps only BJP-dominated states in north

Chief minister Siddaramaiah said Sunday that the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies was more beneficial to the North Indian states than the Suth.

Taking to X, Siddaramaiah said PM Narendra Modi's "sudden concern" for the south was election-driven messaging, timed conveniently with political calculations in states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which are both going to polls on April 9.

"Let us be clear: the issue has never been about whether the number of Lok Sabha seats of southern states increases. The concern is about how they increase - and who benefits disproportionately," said CM.

"Five southern states gain barely 63–66 additional seats, while just seven BJP-dominated states in north gain 128–131 seats - nearly double", he said.

"Even after expanding the Lok Sabha to 816 seats, the collective share of southern states remains around 24%. States that performed better in population control and governance are being penalised. If our share does not improve while the numerical dominance of larger states grows, what exactly is Karnataka gaining from this exercise?" he said. TNN

Bagalkot: Cong candidate banks on dad's legacy, BJP aspirant dares govt

BJP candidate Veeranna Charanthimath and Congress nominee Umesh Meti expressed confidence of victory in the bypoll to the Bagalkot assembly seat. Their focus is development and key local issues, including the Upper Krishna Project (UKP). While Charanthimath dismissed internal dissent and sympathy wave, Meti said his campaign draws on the legacy of his father, the late ex-minister HY Meti, in an interview to Sangamesh Menasinkai of TOI.

No sympathy wave, only development: Charanthimath

There are reports of internal dissent within BJP. Will it impact your prospects?

■ There is not much dissidence. My brother has joined Congress, but that is not a concern. Any minor issues within the party have been resolved. We are confident of winning.

The Congress candidate has the entire machinery, including ministers, and a sympathy factor. How are you countering this?

■ That will not work. There is no sympathy. People will support us based on developmental work and solutions to key issues, mainly submergence due to UKP. We will fulfil their expectations.

What is the focus of your campaign?

■ I am relying on my work and experience. We have worked extensively in the constituency, and that forms the basis of our campaign.

Why should voters of Bagalkot choose you?

■ Our campaign highlights the failures of the Congress govt and the issues like injustice to SC/ST communities in internal reservation. We are reaching voters through door-to-door campaigning. There is no delay by the Union govt on the Upper Krishna Project; the process has been held up due to Telangana approaching the court. Voters are aware, and we are explaining this to them. They will ensure my victory.

Vijayapura City MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal is campaigning for you after being expelled from BJP. How will this help?

■ He is campaigning for me because of Hindutva. He is a popular leader and it will help attract voters. Apart from him, several party functionaries, including union ministers, are working for my success.

DANCE of DEMOCRACY

People want continuity of father's works: Umesh Meti

Your campaign is centred on your father's legacy. How is it shaping your prospects?

■ My father remained popular among voters for his work in the constituency, and people expect continuity of those efforts. The public regard for his contributions is translating into support for my candidature.

BJP has alleged your father did not do much for UKP land losers.

■ The allegation is incorrect. My father ensured compensation higher than market rates for land losers under UKP. Farmers are satisfied with his work and will support us. I accompanied him in development works and gained experience. He also worked on developing Mallapur Gudda as a tourism destination and planned a 200-acre market in Bagalkot.

BJP claims CM Siddaramaiah and his ministers are campaigning due to a lack of confidence in you. Your response?

■ My father was a staunch supporter of Siddaramaiah, and the chief minister's presence reflects the relationship. He is like a fatherly figure to us, and this should not be seen as a lack of confidence.

There are questions over the limited presence of AICC functionaries in the campaign.

■ AICC leaders are engaged in elections in Kerala and other states. However, the general secretary and the secretary have campaigned here.

Why should the people of Bagalkot vote for you?

■ People should vote for me to continue my father's legacy and ensure the overall development of the constituency.

Workers' poll-day leave: Lad cites tracking challenges

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The Election Commission says no deduction of wages shall be made on account of the holiday and any employer who contravenes these provisions shall be liable to a fine. All daily wage and casual workers are also entitled to a paid holiday on the day of the poll

Bengaluru: The Election Commission of India has reiterated that, as per law, all employees who are entitled to vote must be granted a paid holiday on the day of polling. This applies to those employed in any business, trade, industrial undertaking, or other establishment.

Polling for the ongoing elections will be held on April 9 in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Goa, Karnataka, Nagaland and Tripura. Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra will vote on April 23, while West Bengal will go to polls in two phases on April 23 and 29.

"No deduction of wages shall be made on account of such a paid holiday. Any employer who contravenes these provisions shall be liable to a fine. All daily wage and casual workers are also entitled to a paid holiday on the day of the poll," the Commission said in a communiqué issued Friday.

The Commission further stated that electors — including casual and daily wage workers — employed in establishments located outside their constituency, but registered as voters in a constituency going to polls, are entitled to paid leave.

Labour secretary Salma Fahim said, "Directions have been received from the chief secretary, and the director of factories and boilers has issued a circular to all factories. Meanwhile, shops and commercial establishments have also been issued the notification through the labour department. Additionally, the labour officers and labour inspectors have been told to reach out to all shops and commercial establishments in their jurisdictions and issue the circular."

Highlighting gaps in implementation, Labour minister Santosh Lad said, "There is no documented account of how many migrant workers come and go, making it difficult to track compliance with the paid leave mandate. This is especially challenging as the employment is short-term and highly migratory in nature."

The hotel sector, which employs a large number of migrant workers, anticipates disruptions. Subramanya Holla, president of the Bangalore Hotels Association, told **TOI**,

"While the LPG situation has improved with supplies and alternatives such as diesel and wood fire, labour has always been in short supply in the sector. Elections are usually a time when we grant paid leave. However, we also risk nearly 30% of employees not returning."

He added most workers in Karnataka's hotel industry come from the northeastern states. "Elections will affect those from Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and West Bengal, who together account for about 35% of employees in both kitchen and customer-facing roles," he added.

Lingayats not Hindus, asserts minister Patil

Davanagere: Large and medium industries minister **MB Patil** said the All India Veerashaiva Mahasabha and the Jagatika Lingayat Mahasabha were discussing the question of an independent religion status for Veerashaiva Lingayats and urged BJP state president BY Vijayendra to accept that the community is not part of the Hindu religious group.

Speaking to reporters here Sunday, Patil said the two organisations were seeking to resolve the issue through negotiations.

Patil said the Veerashaiva Mahasabha had decided in the presence of the Pancha Peethadhishwaras at a mega convention that Veerashaiva Lingayats were not Hindus.

"Vijayendra and former chief minister BS Yediyurappa were on the dais. Both leaders should accept that Veerashaiva Lingayats are not Hindus," he said. TNN

2 killed while crossing highway, biker booked

Bengaluru: Two men were killed in an early morning accident on National Highway 44 near Vidyashilpa Cross in Yelahanka.

The victims, Siddartha, 18 and Shanthappa Metri, 35, residents of Allalsandra and natives of Sedam in Kalaburagi, worked as labourers. Police said they had returned from Hyderabad on a private bus and got down near Vidyashilpa Cross, where there is no designated stop.

While attempting to cross the highway, they were hit by a speeding KTM Duke heading towards Devanahalli. The impact caused fatal injuries, killing both on the spot.

The rider, Altaf Pasha, 19, from Mathikere, sustained fractures. Police suspect he was racing with friends, had borrowed the bike, and did not possess a valid licence.

A complaint has been filed against the rider, the bus driver for stopping at an unauthorised point, and the National Highways Authority of India for failing to install median barriers. Police said they had warned authorities about safety lapses on the stretch. TNN

Contentions raised on new curbs on bidding

▶ Continued from page 1

He said a meeting of HGML board will take place in the second week of April soon after bypolls to Bagalkot and Davangere assembly constituencies are completed.

"The investigation was ordered based on some changes made in the tender conditions by local officials. It is not a big problem. The technical committee has submitted its report. Based on it we will take further action," Patil added.

A three-member technical panel led by Mallikarjun N, head of mechanical engineering department, SJ Government Polytechnic, is looking into the "unauthorised modifications to the tender conditions, and the resulting violations of the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement (KTPP) Act".

The genesis of the probe began with a tender being called for the purchase of forged steel grinding balls on July 1 2025. Following the receipt of bids by bidders (4 bidders for 125 mm and 6 bidders for 65 mm), the technical evaluation was purportedly completed on Sept 18, 2025.

"However, it is observed that the HGML failed to conduct evaluation in accordance with prescribed procedures, arbitrarily disqualifying all participating vendors on the same day," noted the secretary, adding that the earnest money deposit (EMD) of all the bidders were refunded prematurely within a single day of the tender cancellation.

Acting on the appeal of the bidders, revisional authority passed an order on Nov 14, 2025, directing the tender accepting authority to "adopt a comprehensive and suitably calibrated approach to document scrutiny in future tenders, ensuring both substantive capability and compliance requirements are duly appreciated".

The govt observed that HGML failed to conduct evaluation in accordance with prescribed procedures, arbitrarily disqualifying all participating vendors on the same day

Based on this, and the nature of the requirement for uninterrupted operations to draw gold, HGML was asked to call for a fresh tender on Feb 3, 2026. Even in this fresh tender, the department found that "due diligence and proper application of mind did not appear to have been exercised".

The govt found that HGML had modified the tender clauses to impose "new restrictions on public procurement from bidders of certain countries, necessitating the registration of a land border sharing declaration certificate".

The clause was considered as one without recording cogent reasons or proper justification which effectively forbid early participants from taking part in the new bidding process.

A communication by the chairman of HGML which requested an amendment to waive these newly imposed restrictive clauses, was questioned by the govt and cited "deep inconsistencies in the company's administrative approach".

TOI, in possession of a letter dated Nov 11, 2025 written by Patil, was informed by other bidders that two bidders were favoured by the company leadership and the revisional authority.

War: Iranian couple stranded in Kodagu

Madikeri: A couple from Iran, now staying in Kodagu, are unable to return to their motherland due to war in West Asia. They are unable to book flights back following the Iran-US, Israel war. A woman who is a native of Kodagu and her Iranian husband who were on an annual visit to Kodagu hope that they can fly back before their visas expire.

Naveen, a native of Murnad in Kodagu, met Iranian national Nadher over four decades ago when the former was working in Bengaluru. They married and settled in Bojnurd city in Iran. TNN

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Pagdi ceremony will be held on Monday, 6th April 2026, between 4 PM to 5 PM at Ritz-Carlton Bangalore, Residency Road.
IN GRIEF
Sangitaa Keswani (wife), Aakash Keswani (son), Dimple Keswani (daughter-in-law) and Keswani Family

SAD DEMISE

In Loving Memory

ASHOKE KESWANI
We grieve the loss of our dear friend whose love, warmth, and steadfast friendship have been woven into our lives across decades.
In Grief
Aashish Amarlali & Minali
Mahesh (Bobby) Bhambhani & Sone
Sanjay Gupta & Prreeya
Archana Anil Chhabria

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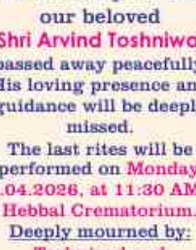

MR B R NARAYANA SINGH
21-7-1947 - 30-03-2026
It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of Mr B R Narayana Singh
He was a loving husband, father, and friend, remembered for his strength, grace, and perseverance. He will be deeply missed and fondly remembered by all who knew him.
Singh family

Sad Demise

With deep sorrow, we inform you that our beloved Shri Arvind Toshniwal passed away peacefully. His loving presence and guidance will be deeply missed.
The last rites will be performed on Monday, 06.04.2026, at 11:30 AM at Hebbal Crematorium.
Deeply mourned by:
Toshniwal and Binani Family.

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In Loving Memory

SHRI. SAINIKRAJ JI CHORDIA
August 12, 1953 - April 06, 2023
Your life taught us resilience, and your absence taught us transformation.
You taught us that even our most profound losses do not define us - what we do with them does.
That is one of the greatest lessons you left behind.

Wife Smt. Navratan Kaur Chordia
Son & Daughter-in-Law Pushpchand & Smt. Aruna Devi Chordia
Grand Children Udairaj Chordia, Chandana Chordia
Brothers & Sisters Shri Prafulchandji, Shri Jethmullji Chordia
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When you have a dream, you've got to grab it and never let go - Carol Burnett

When friends support your film, the script must stand out, says Poornachandra

'We need to make films that audiences will want to come out and talk to one another'

FILM REVIEW

NOW IN CINEMAS

Robert, Zendaya shine in this dark, funny dramedy

Review in short

THE DRAMA

Should you watch it?

The quiet heroism of an ordinary father

HAARU KARUNAKARA

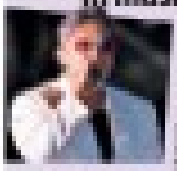
Review in short

It's important to have characters like Radha from Peter in films: Janvi Rayala

FROM HARPER'S BAZAAR TO THE WEDDING ALTAR

Candice King and Steven Krueger exchange vows

Who really profits from misogyny in music?



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THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2026

WOMEN QUOTA BILL RESTS ON FLAWED BASE, CENSUS MUST TO ENSURE RIGHTFUL REPRESENTATION: AKHILESH

NITISH TO TAKE OATH AS RS MEMBER ON APRIL 10, NDA ALLIES WILL THEN DECIDE ON NEXT BIHAR CM: BJP

New PMJAY rule bars many cancer specialists from treating patients

Veterans Trained Via Fellowships Ineligible, Impacts Critical Care

Malathy.Iyer@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Around 15 lakh cancer cases are detected in India every year, adding a patient load equal to the population of a city such as Nashik. Yet several states are excluding hundreds of experienced, fellowship-trained oncologists in the private sector from treating Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) patients.

Their exclusion is not due to inadequate training or lack of experience but because they do not hold NMC-recognised super-speciality degrees such as DM, MCh or DrNB.

Doctors affected by the move told **TOI** that this ignores the reality that, until a few decades ago, fellowships were the only route into oncology; formal courses did not exist. Even now, it's considered prestigious for postgraduate doctors to bag two- or three-year fellowships at cancer hospitals for hands-on training in head and neck surgery, gynae-oncology, haemato-oncology or paediatric oncology surgery.

Many of those now rendered ineligible have gone on to become department heads, medical directors, teachers and senior surgeons, each treating cancer patients over decades. Surat-based Dr Hemish Kania, who compiled data showing over 300 such doctors affected across states, said some of those now barred have even taught oncology to DM or DrNB students.

NMC TAG MANDATORY

- As of 2018, there was only **one medical oncologist per 1 million in India** compared with 161 per 1 million in US
- **Over 68 lakh cancer treatments worth ₹13,000 cr** had been undertaken under PMJAY till March 2025
- **Doctors without NMC-recognised superspecialty degrees** such as DM, MCh, Dr NB now excluded from PMJAY
- In non-metro India, **where private insurance penetration is low**, PMJAY coverage often determines treatment

The shift in eligibility criteria is striking not only because of India's high cancer burden, but also because of its shortage of cancer specialists. India has roughly one medical oncologist per one million and only about 4,000 oncosurgeons. Excluding 300 trained specialists from PMJAY-linked care could reduce access to treatment, especially in smaller cities where private insurance penetration is low, and substantially so for many poor patients who avail themselves of govt medical insurance.

Dr Ravi (name changed), a 42-year-old general surgeon from UP, completed a three-year head and neck cancer fellowship at Tata Memorial Hospital, Parel. In 2021, he returned to his tier-II hometown expecting to fill a gap in cancer care: the city had only six oncosurgeons, four of them fellowship-trained. He, however, finds himself barred from operating on PMJAY cancer patients. "If four of six private-sector cancer surgeons are excluded, PMJAY patients are forced into longer queues," he said.

In Patna, 40-year-old Dr Arun (name changed) said he is "safe" because he works in a govt hospital. "In govt hospitals, at least one member in the team is likely to have recognition under PMJAY. But it may be different if I step into the private sector," he said.

Some doctors said their names have been removed from the HEM 2.0 portal used by the National Health Authority to manage PMJAY. Doctors said hospitals are ending contracts because these specialists can no longer generate PMJAY claims.

Genesis of the problem

Multiple issues have led to the current problem, especially the interpretation of NHA and NMC rules by state health authorities. The genesis of the problem can be traced to before 2018, when efforts by the erstwhile Medical Council of India (MCI) to increase the number of oncology teachers began.

Dr K S Sharma, ex-academic dean of Tata Memorial Centre, recalled that between 2002 and 2010 there were very few DM and MCh seats in medical and surgical oncology. In 2011, after he joined the erstwhile MCI's board of governors, he framed a plan to fix the shortage of teachers by expanding fellowship programmes at reputed cancer hospitals. "These fellowships were not recognised by MCI but had sanctity," he said.

MCI introduced a rule that MS or MD postgraduate doctors with two years' experience in a dedicated cancer hospital as senior residents/fellows could be regarded as teachers until India had enough degree-holding oncologists. Many trained fellows thus took up teaching posts in public cancer institutes, and over time some moved to smaller cities to build independent practices.

But in 2020, MCI was replaced by NMC, which issued guidelines requiring oncologists to hold recognised degrees. Fellowships were not mentioned.

When contacted, NHA CEO Dr Sunil Kumar Barnwal said NHA empanels hospitals, not doctors, and that doctor qualifications are decided by NMC. State authorities, meanwhile, have asked doctors to obtain written clarification from NHA and NMC in this regard. As no such clarification has been issued, the deadlock continues.

Pain: The Price of Being Human?

CITY CITY BANG BANG

SANTOSH DESAI

What is the point of pain? Particularly of extreme pain? That pain has a function is clear—it is a warning sign—to stop what one is doing, to take notice, to seek help. But extreme pain exceeds its function. A person suffering from terminal cancer or a bad accident is not helped in any way by pain. Here, it is an overflow that lacks evolutionary logic. One would have thought that evolution through its random mutations would have taken care of this, but that hasn't happened.

What is striking is that even science struggles to solve pain. Either solutions are not effective enough, or they unleash side effects and dependency that limit their utility. Pain is so embedded in the dense network of systems that operate the body that eliminating it without affecting anything else looks virtually impossible.

What amplifies pain is the human ability to think. Pain is something we imagine, anticipate, amplify and revisit. Animals seem to suffer less, perhaps because pain for them is bounded. The extent of pain may not vary in some species, but animals don't add layers of meaning to the pain they experience.

And then there is pain that has no physical origin at all. Grief, humiliation, heartbreak, existential dread— these hurt intensely yet no tissue is damaged, no alarm has been triggered. This is suffering generated purely by thought, by the meaning we impose on experience. It is perhaps the clearest evidence that our cognitive architecture doesn't just amplify pain— it creates it.

A metaphorical way of making sense of this is to think of pain as the price we pay for being human. As human beings, we have the unique capacity to conceptualise our experiences, to give words to them, to create a world that resides in that complex construction called the mind. The human scale of pain is, in part, a product of this special ability.

Nature is brutal, but not violent. Not in the sense we are. Human beings have the ability to inflict pain on others, not out of necessity but as a choice. We torture, we hunt, we are cruel because we are able to detach ourselves from the violence we commit, and use it to make meaning that appeals to us. We wage wars over fictions we have created, and kill to defend them. We can harm over thousands of kilometres without being untouched by the consequences of our actions. The same faculties that have allowed us to build civilisations have armed us with the ability to create unique forms of pain. Not only do human beings have the ability to experience extreme pain, we have the desire to inflict it on others deliberately.

Biology does not care for our notions of moral symmetry. The nervous system acts as it has to, responding to stimuli as it has been designed to. But human beings need more. We need to understand, interpret and make sense of what is happening. Unlike animals, human beings ask— why me? Why am I having to suffer like this?

One way to think about this is to see pain through a moral frame. See it as a tax we pay to make up for our specialness. The same ability that lets us conceptualise pain for others does so for ourselves. At a deeper level, we can think of it as guilt monetised. As the price we pay for what we do to others. As some form of moral compensation that we fork out as a way of balancing the cosmic ledger.

And it works at the species level. Those who commit genocide sleep well at night, the torturers go on to lead ordinary lives. To cope with this injustice, we invent the ideas of heaven and hell, of an afterlife and a past life, for otherwise there is neither justice nor explanation.

That is not to argue that human beings literally pay a price for our cruelty through the device of extreme pain. Biology does not care for our notions of moral symmetry. The nervous system acts as it has to, responding to stimuli as it has been designed to. But human beings need more. We need to understand, interpret and make sense of what is happening. Unlike animals, human beings ask— why me? Why am I having to suffer like this?

And there is no answer that science can provide that feels adequate. And all that the moral frame can tell us is that an innocent individual appears to be paying the price for what we, as a species, have done. If we are the kind of beings who cannot accept suffering as meaningless, then we do not just try to make sense of our own pain. We extend that impulse to the suffering we see around us. Not because we believe it has a clear reason, but because it demands a response from us. Being empathetic and compassionate does not balance the books, but it does become a way for us to cope with the reality of pain.

Every act that relieves suffering— a hand held, a word spoken, a body eased— does not settle any cosmic account. But it acknowledges that pain, however it arises, cannot be left alone. That the same consciousness which turns suffering into a question can also turn it into a response.

Animals are shielded from such questions by the limitations of their capabilities. They don't need to explain pain or justify it. When we suffer and suffer without reason, we strive to understand why. And answers, whether in the realm of science, faith or morality, are uniformly dissatisfying. We suffer on account of our humanity; the only way to deal with it might be to display more of it.

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STATOISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Maha, Guj homes have more than half of India's PNG connections

Statewise no. of domestic PNG connections, top 10 (in lakh)

Western and northern states lead India's shift towards piped natural gas, with **Maharashtra** alone accounting for **26% of the country's 1.6 crore** domestic PNG connections

*As on Jan 31, 2026; Source: PPAC

Kashmir's 'red gold' has a prickly predator: Porcupines

Naseer.Ganai@timesofindia.com

Production has fallen sharply from about 22,000kg a decade-and-a-half ago to nearly 1,000kg now, said MLA Hasnian Masoodi

Srinagar: A prickly pest stalks Kashmir's "red gold". Farmers in Pampore now live on pins and needles.

Across Pampore's saffron highlands — about 15km southeast of Srinagar in Pulwama district — an unusual predator is eating into one of the region's most prized crops. The burrowing Indian crested porcupine, a nocturnal rodent, has begun feeding on saffron corms beneath the soil, hollowing out harvests before they can bloom. A corm is the underground, bulb-like stem of the Crocus sativus plant that produces autumn-flowering purple flowers and the precious red stigma used for the spice saffron — kong in Kashmiri, kesar in Hindi, zafaran in Persian.

Pampore MLA Hasnian Masoodi of National Conference said the pace of destruction could erase Kashmir's saffron in coming years. "Porcupines are devouring saffron roots. Production has fallen sharply from about 22,000kg a decade-and-a-half ago to nearly 1,000kg now," he said.

The crisis surfaced in J&K assembly Saturday, where forest minister Javed Ahmed Rana outlined measures after Masoodi raised the alarm. Teams from wildlife and forest departments are assessing damage and mapping vulnerable zones across Pampore's saffron plateau, he said.

Masoodi pushed back, saying ground reality is grimmer. "There is no wildlife survey. I don't know how these porcupines came to Kashmir, but now they are here and destroying crops," he said.

For many farmers, losses are far steeper. Some report up to 80% damage to fields.

In Khrew — a saffron-growing pocket roughly 20km southeast of Srinagar within Pampore — output has nearly vanished. "Khrew once contributed around 4,000kg to the total yield of 22,000kg, but fields there now lie largely unproductive," said Masoodi, who hails from the area.

Wildlife experts and officials trace the surge to a mix of ecological shifts. Deforestation has shrunk natural habitats, pushing porcupines towards cultivated land. Declining predator numbers — especially leopards — have removed a key check on their population. Warmer winters have extended foraging windows, allowing rodents to remain active longer.

Yet control options remain limited. As a protected species under wildlife law, porcupines cannot be killed, turning crop damage into a simmering human-animal conflict.

Inspired by TV serial, killed drunk driver, say students

Nagpur: Three second-year engineering students, who were arrested for killing a 44-year-old intoxicated man after offering him help, confessed to committing the crime in a premeditated attack inspired by crime-based television serials, reports **Soumitr Bose**. Police said the accused, Aryan Shende, 22, Rishabh Kamble, 20, and Anuj Waghmare, 19, admitted they smashed the skull of the victim, Suchit Bhojapure, with rocks, stripped him naked and dumped the body in a secluded area near a crematorium, police said.

Patient can't pay for hospital lapses, says consumer court

Vadodara: Insurance fine print ran into a hard stop at a consumer court. A patient's claim denied on hospital compliance grounds has now been cleared, with compensation, reports **Tushar Tere**. Vadodara District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission recently directed The New India Assurance Company Ltd to settle a mediclaim filed by 63-year-old Indradutt Pandya, holding that a policyholder cannot be penalised for lapses by a hospital. Pandya, insured since 2003, underwent cataract surgery in 2022 and sought reimbursement of Rs 44,700. His claim was rejected as the hospital failed to meet registration norms under Vadodara Municipal Corporation.

PANJAB UNIVERSITY, CHANDIGARH

Applications are invited for the post of **Vice-Chancellor, Panjab University, Chandigarh** in the scale of pay of Rs.2,10,000/- (fixed) per month and other Allowances as applicable.

The detailed advertisement along with other necessary information and application format is available on the website: **http://jobs.puchd.ac.in.**

The last date for receiving applications is **5th May, 2026.**

REGISTRAR

In 24 hours, two tigers killed in MP in territorial fights

P.Naveen@timesofindia.com

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh lost two tigers in separate incidents within 24 hours, taking the number of big cat deaths in the state to around 16 so far in 2026.

The deaths, believed to be linked to territorial clashes, come at a time when the All-India Tiger Estimation-2026 (AITE-26), the sixth cycle of the nationwide tiger census, is at a concluding stage.

In Mandla's Kanha Tiger Reserve, the carcass of tigress Sunaina (T-122), was found near Sijhora Road.

Foresters said the tigress had deep injuries on her body. "Prima facie, it appears to be a case of a territorial fight with another tiger," an officer said. All body parts were found intact. Viscera samples have been sent for forensic analysis to confirm the exact cause of death. Around 10 years old, Sunaina was among the most popular tigresses in Kanha, often sighted by tourists.

In a separate incident in Satpura Tiger Reserve in Narmadapuram district, the carcass of a four-month-old cub was found in the Nayakheda area of Matkuli range. The cub is suspected to have been killed during a clash between tigers. Forest staff were alerted after hearing loud roars of two tigers late on Saturday evening. A patrol team rushed to the spot and found the cub dead. The area was secured overnight.

On Sunday morning, officers found pugmarks of both a male and a female tiger near the site. Based on these signs and injury marks, officials believe the cub was killed during an attack linked to territorial behaviour.

Jawan rapes colleague's daughter, held

Patna: A Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) jawan was arrested in Kishanganj on Sunday on charge of allegedly raping the 14-year-old daughter of his colleague, reports **Kshitiz**.

The accused has been identified as 35-year-old Manchan Pawar, a head constable posted with the 19th Battalion of SSB.

According to police, the incident occurred on Saturday evening when the girl's father was on duty and she was alone at home. Taking advantage of the situation, the accused allegedly entered the house and committed the crime before fleeing. He was later arrested from a rented accommodation, where he was hiding.

Sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Manglesh Kumar Singh said a case has been registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act. Following his arrest, the accused was sent to judicial custody on Sunday and lodged in Kishanganj jail. "The rape survivor's medical examination has been conducted and her statement recorded," Singh said.

An internal inquiry has also been initiated at the SSB's battalion level.

In a lst, freshwater fish fossils found in Shivalik foothills

Shivani.Azad
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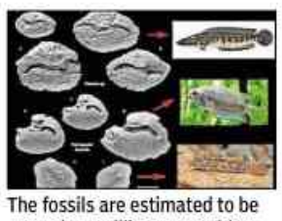

The fossils are estimated to be around 4.5 million years old

Dehradun: In a significant find, paleontologists have discovered aquatic life fossils for the first time in the Shivalik foothills near Mohand on the outskirts of Dehradun — a site previously known exclusively for terrestrial animal remains. Scientists believe the find may reshape the understanding of the region's prehistoric environment. It also gives a rare insight on Pliocene epochs freshwater ecosystem of Shivalik, which scientists say ranges from 5 to 2.5 million years.

The discovery was made by researchers from Dehradun-based Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG) and other institutions. The findings comprise ear bones, or otoliths, of three distinct freshwater fish species – snakehead (Channa sp.), goby (Gobiidae indet), and gourami (Trichogaster fasciata).

Senior scientist Ningthoujam Premjit Singh of WIHG said, "The discovery of gourami fish fossil marks its first recorded appearance in India and only the second in the world, after a previous find in Sumatra, Indonesia. This discovery will widen our understanding of past aquatic ecosystems and the biogeographic history of South Asian freshwater fishes."

According to Singh, these fossils are estimated to be around 4.5 million years old. Explaining the field work undertaken by the researchers, he said that bulk sediments weighing approximately '500 kg' were collected from fossil localities during the field season in 2024 and processed in the WIHG laboratory.

Congress flags 3 'passports' in Himanta wife's name; CM plans suit

Prabin.Kalita
@timesofindia.com

Guwahati/Delhi: Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and his wife Riniki Bhuyan Sarma moved to initiate criminal and civil defamation proceedings against Congress's publicity chief Pawan Khera on Sunday after the latter dropped in Delhi what the state BJP termed "prominent lies" supported by "shoddily" Photoshopped images of three foreign passports allegedly bearing Riniki's name.

Khera, who doubled down on his allegations in Guwahati later, also alleged that apart from holding passports issued by UAE, Egypt and Antigua and Barbuda, Riniki owns undisclosed properties in Dubai. He alleged the Sarmas also owned a limited liability company registered at Wyoming in the US, worth $53,000 crore.

Voter inducements worth over ₹650cr seized from states/UT

Freebies Account For Largest Share Of Seizures In Poll-Bound States

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New Delhi: Potential voter inducements worth over Rs 650 crore have been seized by Election Commission teams from the five poll-bound states/UT so far, with West Bengal accounting for almost half of these seizures.

Since the electronic seizure management system (ESMS) was activated on Feb 26, 2026, flying squads and static surveillance teams have reported cumulative seizures worth Rs 319 crore in West Bengal, Rs 170 crore in Tamil Nadu, Rs 97 crore in Assam, Rs 58 crore in Kerala and Rs 7 crore in Puducherry.

ATTACHMENTS SURPASS ₹650 CRORE

S.N	State	Cash (₹ Crore)	Liquor Qty (Litres)	Liquor Value (₹Crore)	Drugs Value (₹Crore)	Precious Metal Value (₹Crore)	Freebies / Other Value (₹Crore)	Total (₹Crore)
1	West Bengal	11	21,29,103	55	65	39	150	319
2	Tamil Nadu	30	74,029	2	67	8	63	170
3	Assam	4	684,627	20	56	4	13	97
4	Kerala	8	64,862	2	41	1	5	58
5	Puducherry	0.2	11,068	0.3	0	6	0.1	7
	TOTAL	53.2	29,63,689	79.3	230	58	231.1	651

A category-wise breakup shows that freebies accounted for the largest percentage of seizures in terms of value (Rs 231 crore), followed by drugs (Rs 230 crore), liquor (Rs 79.3 crore), precious metals (Rs 58 crore) and cash (Rs 53.2 crore). As per EC data on seizures made during the 2021 assembly polls in these states, by April 16, 2021, when polling had concluded in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry and was half-way through in Bengal, their cumulative value had crossed Rs 1,000 crore. Tamil Nadu topped the tally with seizures worth Rs 446.3 crore, followed by West Bengal (Rs 300 crore), Assam (Rs 122 crore), Kerala (Rs 85 crore) and Puducherry (Rs 37 crore). As for the ongoing election campaigns, West Bengal tops the tally on freebies, valued at a whopping Rs 150 crore and accounting for 48% of seizures in the state. Freebies seized in Tamil Nadu were valued at Rs 63 crore.

500 judges on SIR duty, cases pile up across Bengal courts

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Kolkata: The involvement of 500-odd judicial officers — judges in lower courts — from across Bengal in the adjudication of doubtful cases flagged on the voters' list published in Feb has sharply slowed down the disposal of cases in courts in the state.

The overall "clearance rate" of cases in Bengal's lower courts stood at 62% in 2025. This March, the monthly rate was just 42%. According to the district judiciary's "virtual justice clock", 90,685 cases were registered across the state in March, of which 38,527 were disposed of.

Kolkata's March disposal rate was even lower, at 39%. Of the 42,687 cases registered in lower courts in the city, 16,717 were disposed of. At 19%, West Burdwan had the lowest rate.

On Feb 20, a Supreme Court bench led by CJI Surya Kant had decided to entrust judicial officers with an "extraordinary" responsibility — scanning the documents of around 60 lakh individuals placed under adjudication during the special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral roll and decide whether their voting right could be restored. The bench had directed "an interim arrangement for the shifting of matters of interim relief or of an urgent nature to alternative courts for a week or 10 days, within which this entire process is scheduled to be completed".

However, the adjudication has been continuing for over a month. The judicial officers now face a deadline of April 6 and 9 for the two phases of the assembly polls scheduled for April 23 and 29.

BJP offers LPG, e-scooters in Puducherry manifesto

Chennai: BJP on Sunday released its manifesto for the Puducherry assembly elections, offering free LPG cylinders, electric scooters for meritorius Class 12 girls and targeted welfare measures for women and fishermen, **reports Ram Sundaram**.

Puducherry BJP president V P Ramalingam said the party will provide one free LPG cylinder during Pongal and another during Vinayagar Chaturthi to every household to ensure festivals are not disrupted by fuel shortages. "To ease transportation difficulties for girl students and encourage them to pursue higher education, free electric scooters will be provided under the Anbu Thangai scheme to those who score high marks in Class 12 public exams," he said. Roughly 2,000 to 3,000 students could benefit annually under the free scooter scheme.

Amit Shah reaches out to Christians, seeks support to form NDA govt in Kerala

Union home minister Amit Shah holds a roadshow at Beypore in Kozhikode on Sunday

Kochi/Thiruvananthapuram: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday appealed to the Christian community to back the NDA, urging it to help form the next govt in Kerala.

"On the occasion of Easter, I appeal to brothers and sisters, especially followers of Jesus, to stand with the NDA and help build a prosperous Kerala," he told a public meeting in Kolenchery, Ernakulam, while campaigning for T20 candidate Babu Divakaran.

Shah's outreach comes amid concerns among sections of the Christian community over proposed amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. Claiming that the NDA's plank of "justice for all, appeasement of none" was evident in its work, he said the Centre acted firmly against the Popular Front of India for anti-India activities. He accused both the LDF and UDF of opposing the ban and maintaining ties with outfits such as SDPI and Jamaat-e-Islami. "Kerala is not safe under either front," he said. He also targeted the fronts over the Munambam land dispute, claiming they "kept silent" when the Waqf Board attempted to take over land of local residents. TNN

PM accuses TMC of protecting infiltrators

▶ Continued from page 1

Malda in north Bengal turned into a political flashpoint after the gherao of judicial magistrates at a block office in Kaliachak subdivision last week during protests linked to electoral roll revision.

Modi turned to cross-border infiltration, saying SIR of electoral rolls aimed to identify "illegal settlers" and remove their names.

"Bengal's demography has undergone a dangerous transformation in the 15 years of TMC govt. TMC has allowed infiltrators to enter Bengal and absorbed them into its syndicate network. That is why govt of India is identifying infiltrators and taking steps to remove them," he said. He accused TMC govt of opposing SIR and "threatening to scrap" CAA to "protect infiltrators", alleging that "rights of Hindu citizens who are legally settled here" were being undermined. Modi questioned TMC's choice of naming its manifesto Ishtehar. "Instead of using a Bengali word, they have used the term 'ishtehar', which raises questions about how they are representing Bengal's identity," he said.

NTK fielded six Brahmin candidates

▶ Continued from page 1

In contrast, actor Vijay's TVK has fielded two Brahmin candidates while Tamil nationalist Seeman's NTK has fielded six. The two parties have chosen constituencies like Mylapore and Srirangam, where there are sizeable Brahmin votes. Most candidates fielded by the major parties in the state now belong to OBC communities, except in reserved constituencies.

"AIADMK has done injustice to the Brahmin community. Jaya and MGR had always fielded Brahmin candidates," said political commentator Raveendran Duraisamy. Political analyst Arun Kumar says the AIADMK had retained Brahmin support for decades. "But this has shifted in recent years. After Jayalalithaa's death, Brahmin voters have moved towards BJP. As a result, AIADMK no longer sees electoral value in fielding Brahmin candidates, leading to reduced representation," he said. On the rationale behind NTK fielding six Brahmin candidates, analysts say Seeman has taken an anti-Periyar stance.

34001/18/2627

e-mail ID- supenger_rbjyp@yahoo.co.in

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, JEYPORE (R&B) CIRCLE, JEYPORE
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)
Bid Identification No. C.C.E.J.C (R&B) - 19/2025-26

No. 2730 Date. 31.03.2026

1. Nature of the work : **BUILDING WORKS**
2. Total No. of Works : 02 (Two) No.
3. Tender cost : Rs. **2.20 Crs. to 3.40 Crs.**
4. Period of completion : 10 (Ten) to 11(Eleven) Calendar Months each.
5. Cost of Bid Document : Rs. 10,000/-
6. Bid Security (EMD) : Rs. **2.20 Lacs to 3.40 Lacs** as per column no. 06 of IFB.
7. Class of Contractor : "B" & "A" Class as per Cl no. 05 of TCN & according to Financial Eligibility.
8. Date & time of availability of bid Document in the portal : from 12:00 hours of 10.04.2026 to 17:00 hours of 24.04.2026
9. Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the Portal : 17:00 hours of 24.04.2026
10. Opening date of Bid : 11:00 hours of 27.04.2026
11. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Chief Construction Engineer, Jeypore (R&B) Circle, Jeypore

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in
Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Jeypore (R&B) Circle, Jeypore
OIPR-34001/34108/1/26-27/0002

34001/4/2627

E-mail.ID-sectcrb_2006@yahoo.co.in
Tel/Fax – 0671-2301751/2302751

Government of Odisha
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
CUTTACK (R&B) CIRCLE, CUTTACK
('e'-PROCUREMENT NOTICE)
Bid Identification No.CCE.Ctc.(R&B) 20/2025-26.

1. The Chief Construction Engineer, Cuttack (R&B) Circle, Cuttack on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites on Percentage rate basis bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Building works as mentioned below.
2. No. of work : 03 Nos.
3. Nature of work : Building works
4. Class of contractor : **'B', & 'A' Class**
5. Tender paper cost : Rs.10000/- **(online)**
6. Available of bid document in the web site. : **From 10.04.2026 to 17.30 Hours of 24.04.2026**
7. Date of opening of bid : **Dt.27.04.2026 at 11.00 Hours.**
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website **https://tendersodisha.gov.in**. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said web site

Sd/- **T. Behera**
Chief Engineer (Civil)
Cuttack (R&B) Circle
OIPR-34001/34012/1/26-27/0001

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS
OPEN E-TENDER

The following E-Tenders can be accessed under the link **www.ireps.gov.in.** Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link **www.ireps.gov.in → login → E-Tender Stores/Supply.** Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dy. CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 9163340711 or AMM/HQ-II, 9163340724. **Office Address: Office of The PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan. [A] No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162, Date: 28/03/2026. Sl. No.: [1]. Tender No.: 70261255A. Brief Description of Item:** Modified Cow Catcher Assly For WAG-9HC Loco to Specification No. CLW/MS/3/107 ALT-8, Drawing no. 1209-02.140-032 Alt. 11. **[Warranty Period:** 30 Months after the date of delivery]. **Quantity : 144.00 Set. Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees): ₹ 167340.00. Tender Closing Date & Time (IST): 20/04/2026 at 11:00 AM.**
[B] No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162, Date: 01/04/2026. Sl. No.:[1]. Tender No.: 70265004. Brief Description of Item: FSK Train Bus suitable for push pull operation of 3-phase electric passenger locomotive with cable, connector and accessories as per FRS no. CLW/CD & D/ES/3/0556, Alt.0. **[Warranty Period:** 30 Months after the date of delivery]. **Quantity: 30.00 Numbers. Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees): ₹ 300900.00. Tender Closing Date & Time (IST): 23/04/2026 at 11:00 AM.**

PR2/322 PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan
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11001/2/2627

Annexure-A

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Lokaseva Bhavan, Sachivalaya Marg, Bhubaneswar - 751001
Phone: 0674-2392133 | Website: https://dhe.odisha.gov.in
Mail: sec3hed@gmail.com

CORRIGENDUM OF RFP NO.01/2026

Higher Education Department had invited RFP for 'CONSTRUCTION OF COMPLETE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR 18 NEWLY ESTABLISHED GOVERNMENT COLLEGES, One MDC under RUSA, INFRASTRUCTURE FOR B.Ed COLLEGES, HOSTELS FOR 11 EXISTING GOVERNMENT HEIs, 20 HOSTELS FOR AIDED COLLEGES AND SOME OTHER PROJECTS AS AND WHEN REQUIRED"
The complete details of corrigendum & clarification are available at **https://dhe.odisha.gov.in**

Sd/-
Special Secretary to Govt.,
GCNE, HED
OIPR-11001/11001/1/26-27/0001

25001/5/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNDARGARH
AT/PO-SANKARA, SUNDARGARH-770020
E-mail address-serw_sundargarh@yahoo.com
No. Tender Online - RWCCESNG -43 of 2025-26, Letter No 2101/Dtd. 31.03.2026
e-Procurement NOTICE

1. Type of the Work : Road Work(MMSY-TRIP)
2. Class of Contractor : As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure
3. Time of Completion : As specified in the column-5 of the Annexure
4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached
5. Estimated Cost : As specified in the column-4 of the Annexure
6. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding From	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding To	Last Date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender Technical Bid	Date & Time of opening of tender Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh	RWCCESNG-43 of 2025-26	10.04.2026 11:00 AM	27.04.2026 5:00 PM	24.04.2026 5:00 PM	28.04.2026 11:00 AM	Will be intimated separately

Further details can be seen from the website **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh
OIPR-25001/25133/1/26-27/0002

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS
OPEN GLOBAL E-TENDER

No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162, Date: 31/03/2026. The following **e-Tenders** can be accessed under the link **www.ireps.gov.in.** Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link **www.ireps.gov.in → login → E-Tender Stores/Supply.** Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dy.CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 9163340711 or AMM/HQ, 9163340713. **Office Address:** Office of The PCMM /CLW/Chittaranjan. **Sl. No.: [1]. Tender No.:73261001. Brief Description of Item: (i)** Spheribloc for WAP-7 as per RDSO Spec. No. RDSO/2007/EL/SPEC/0051 Rev.3 & Drawing No. IA016- 00005 Rev.3. **[Warranty Period:** 30 Months after the date of delivery], **(ii)** Spheribloc for WAP-7 As per Spec. No. RDSO/2007/EL/SPEC/0051 (REV-3) Drawing No. IA016.00005 (REV-3). **[Warranty Period:** 30 Months after the date of delivery], **(iii)** Spheribloc Imported for axle guide link/TM torque arm for WAP-7 locos as per RDSO Spec. No. RDSO/2007/EL/SPEC/0051/Rev.3 or latest and CLW Drg No. 1209.01.215.005 or latest. **[Warranty Period:** 30 Months after the date of delivery], **(iv)** Axle Guide Link Spheribloc For WAP-5 Locos as per RDSO Specification No. RDSO/2007/EL/SPEC/0051 Rev. 3. **[Warranty Period:** 30 Months after the date of delivery], **(v)** Spheribloc for Traction Motor Support Arm for WAP-5 locos as per RDSO Specification No. RDSO/2007/EL/SPEC/0051/Rev.3. and ABB Drg. No. IA016-00269 Rev.3. **[Warranty Period:** 30 Months after the date of delivery], **(vi)** Set of Spheribloc for WAP-5 Loco as per RDSO Specn. No. RDSO/2007/EL/ SPEC/0051 (REV-3). Set consist of 03 items in 36 nos. (1) Spheribloc for Axle Guide as per ABB Drg. No. IA-016-00003 (REV-1) Qty-16 nos. (2) Spheribloc for Torque Arm as per Abb Drg. No. IA016.00005(REV-3) Qty.8 Nos. (3) Spheribloc for TM Nose Support as per ABB Drg. No. IA-016- 00269 (REV-3) Qty-12 Nos. **[Warranty Period:** 30 Months after the date of delivery]. **Quantity: (i)** 36926.00 Nos., **(ii)** 3247.00 Nos., **(iii)** 669.00 Nos., **(iv)** 1023.00 Nos., **(v)** 1142.00 Nos., **(vi)** 88.00 Set. **Earnest Money Deposit:** 0.00 (INR)/0.00 (USD). **Tender Closing Date & Time (IST): 30/04/2026 at 11:00 AM.**

PR5/325 PCMM/CLWCRJ.
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CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS
CORRIGENDUM

Tender No. 70/26/0031, Date: 30.03.2026. Following corrigendum is prepared against the **T/Case No. 70/26/0031** for procurement of "Supply, Installation, Testing and Commisssioning of Onboard KAVACH Loco Equipment for EF12K, WAG-9HC/WAP-7/WAP-5, MELPL WAG-12 & Siemens D-9 Locomotives as per RDSO Specification No. RDSO/SPN/196/2020, Ver 4.0 or Latest" i.e. Change of Item Description. **Description:** Item Description (Sl. No. 2) under Group2, Item Details of NIT (PI. No. 29614181). **From(existing):** Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Onboard KAVACH Loco equipment for EF12K Locomotive as per RDSO Spec no. RDSO/SPN /196/2020, Ver-4.0 or latest. The scope of supply will also include: Complete wiring, harnessing, cabling and connection with Loco KAVACH System. Zonal Railway shall provide SIM as per requirement. **To Be Read As:** Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of Onboard KAVACH Loco equipment as per RDSO Spec no. RDSO/SPN/196/2020, Ver 4.0 or latest for EF-12K locomotives as per the scheme approved by COE/IRISET & RDSO. The scope of supply will also include: Complete wiring, harnessing, cabling and connection with Loco KAVACH System. Warranty Period 04 (four) years from the date of issue of completion certificate (as stipulated in Annexure-I, Para-5 & 6). Annual Maintenance for 11 (eleven) years will be as per ANNEXURE-I. Zonal Railway shall provide SIM as per requirement.

PR3/323 AMM/HQ-II/CLW/Chittaranjan
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business

BUSINESS PROPOSALS

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REQUIRED Graphic Designer– Photoshop/ Corel Draw/ Illustrator Experience 1 Year or above in around Rajajinagar. Contact: 9902891620/ 9845579620

real estate

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For Participation visit : www.jsrbids.com
or Contact for further details: 9555342169 (V.K. Raj) 9313227701 (Yash Agarwal)

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CHANGE OF NAME

I Sreenivas Raghavendra Rao @ Srinivas R @ R Srinivas, s/o Raghavendra Rao B, residing at 611, 2nd Main, 2nd Block, Rajajinagar, Bangalore, have changed my name to Srinivas Raghavendra Rao for all future purposes.

I Nagina Begum W/O, Rahmatulla R/o Ward No 17 Chowdareddy Palya Chintamani,a Vide Affidavit Dated 04/04/2025 Sworn Before Notary Manjunatha Reddy Chintamani have changed my name to Syed Nagina.

I, Geeta Hegde, w/o Shivarama N Bhat, residing at No. 115 Malgudi 3rd cross 1st A main ISRO layout Bangalore-560078 have changed my name to Geeta G Hegde. Affidavit dated 1/04/2026 notarized by V Srinivasa Reddy.

I, Eshani Sarkar, W/O of Soham Chakraborty residing at 1602,Bitul Eeman,E block,5th Main Road,AECS Layout,Kundalahalli,Bengaluru, have changed my name after marriage to Eshani Sarkar Chakraborty for all future purposes.

I, Seelam Mary Vimala, D/o Joji Reddy Gogi Reddy born on 15th August, 1975 residing at No. 57, SJR Eternity Phase -I, Kodigehalli Road, Hoodi, Bangalore - 560048, have changed my name to Seelam Vimala Reddy, vide affidavit dated 1st April, 2026 at Bangalore.

I, Shamanth C S/o Chandrashekhar H, R/o No. 45/239, Kalegowda Garden, BEML Layout, 5th Stage, 5th Phase, Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Bengaluru 560098. I have changed my name to Shamanth Chandrashekhar Bhat for all future purposes.

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Online bids are invited for Shifting/Modification of 33KV, 11kV, LT lines and Transformers etc. of UHBVNL infringing Delhi–Panipat-Karnal Namo Bharat corridor from Panipat to Karnal (Ch. 97300-136500)
For detailed information and subsequent addendum/ corrigendum (if any), please visit NCRTC website www.ncrtc.in or CPP Portal www.etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app from 06.04.2026 to 11.05.2026 (1500 hrs)
S/d - CPM/Panipat

Maharashtra State Agricultural Marketing Board, Pune (MSAMB)
e-Tender Notice
MSAMB invites e-Tender for Construction of Godown having its storage capacity 1000 MT at Agricultural Produce Market Committee Dondaicha, District Dhule (Maharashtra State) Estimate cost of said work is Rs.132.17 Lakh (GST Extra).
For details, please visit www.msamb.com and https://mahatenders.gov.in.
Managing Director

SBI
Central Recruitment & Promotion Department (CRPD), 3rd Floor, Atlanta Building, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
State Bank of India has issued two Requests for Proposal (RFP) for empanelment of HR Consultant/s, one for hiring manpower in Senior Management/Executive Level Positions and one for hiring manpower in Junior/Middle Management in the Bank. For details please visit 'Procurement News' at Bank's Website https://sbi.bank.in
Place: Mumbai Sd/- Deputy General Manager (CRPD)
Date: 06.04.2026 HR Dept., Corporate Centre, Mumbai

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(A Government of India Enterprise)
Web: www.rvnl.org, E-mail: info@rvnl.org
CIN: L74999DL2003GOI118633
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
EoI No.:RVNL/BD/NMDC-Projects/EOI/2026, Date: 06/04/2026
General Manager/Civil/PIU-Waltair on behalf of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from Indian Companies for Prequalification and Shortlisting of Construction Agencies to bid for works of NMDC Ltd. for Construction of Multi-storey RCC Buildings with framed structure, Shopping Complex, Club House, Sports Complex etc. and associated works for development of township at Bacheli and Kirandul, in the state of Chhattisgarh to be executed by Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL).
EOI Submission cut-off Date and Time : 26/04/2026 up to 15:00 Hrs.
For further details and updates, please visit **https://rvnl.org/active-tenders.**
Any amendments or corrigenda, if issued, will also be hosted on the same website.
General Manager/Civil/PIU-Waltair

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No: HMRDC/Project/12/Capital Consultancy/2025-26 Date: 02.04.2026
TENDER NOTICE
HMRDC invites sealed tender for the engagement of an Independent Consultant for Capital investment review, Capacity Augmentation Planning and cost Apportionment Study.
The last date for receipt of the Tender is 27.04.2026 at 15.00 Hrs.
For more details interested parties may visit the registered office of the Company mentioned above or visit our website: **www.hmrdc.com** under Tenders / EOI's.
Sd/-
CS/HMRDC

8th Indian LPG ship sails past Hormuz safely

New Delhi: Green Asha, an Indian merchant ship carrying LPG crossed the Strait of Hormuz safely on Sunday, barely two days after another vessel, Green Sanvi, sailed through the conflict-hit sea route. It is the eighth Indian ship with LPG cargo to do so. With this, there are now 16 Indian-flagged ships to the west of the Strait, including Jag Vikram, which is also loaded with cooking gas. Loaded with around 15,400 tonnes of LPG, Green Asha has 26 Indian seafarers aboard. The LPG tanker is a mid-sized gas carrier (MGC) owned by MOL India, the Indian arm of Japan-based global shipping major Mitsui OSK Lines. TNN

8 lakh new PNG connections in one month, says official

Atul Mathur & Sidhartha | TNN

Centre has urged people to use alternative fuels such as piped gas, induction and electric cooktops wherever feasible

New Delhi: Nearly eight lakh new piped gas consumers have joined the fold over the past month amid a drive by the govt and gas companies to push its use and reduce dependence on cooking gas cylinders, a top official said Sunday.

"We have managed quite well, delivering around 50 lakh cylinders consistently, fully meeting domestic demand and up to 80% of commercial demand. There is no reason for anybody to fear shortages," the official told TOI. Around half the new piped gas connections — to households and for commercial use — have already been activated, while the rest are under process.

Separately, over 16,000 LPG connections have been surrendered following the govt's nudge to ensure those with active piped gas connections do not continue to retain cylinders, easing pressure on the system. People wishing to surrender their connections can submit details on the designated portal, which also has a 'hall of fame' to recognise consumers who have voluntarily given up their connections.

Amid concerns over supply shortages and long queues, officials said there was sufficient stock of crude oil, petroleum products and cooking gas, which were being replenished. "We have managed quite well for over a month, and we are tying up supplies and importing from wherever required," the official said.

The Centre has urged people to use alternative fuels such as piped gas, induction and electric cooktops wherever feasible. Officials said online cylinder bookings have risen to 95%, while authentication code-based deliveries — aimed at preventing diversion at the distributor level — have increased from 53% in Feb to 90% on Saturday.

To help the migrant population without regular LPG connections, oil companies have sold about 6.6 lakh portable 5kg cylinders since March 23, including 90,000 on Saturday, up from a daily average of 70-75,000 before the war.

Chabahar Port work to expand faster once war is over, says Iran envoy

New Delhi: As bombs fall and sanctions bite across West Asia, Iran has said its economic engagement with India will remain steady during the war and grow faster once conditions stabilise. Iran's ambassador to India, **Mohammad Fathali**, indicated to **TOI** wartime disruptions are "mere speed bumps" and that Tehran's "outlook on the future of Iran-India economic relations — even during wartime and especially in the post-war period — remains positive and expansive".

Fathali said, "Economic cooperation between our two nations is built on mutual interests and trust, and there is significant potential for further development." Placing spotlight on the Chabahar Port project, he added it is a key project in this relationship. "In this regard, the Chabahar Port, as a strategic project, plays a key role in strengthening trade and transit links between Iran, India, and the region," he said.

Positioned on Iran's southeastern coast, Chabahar has long been New Delhi's strategic bypass to landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asia, sidestepping Pakistan's choke points, which does not allow overland transit for Indian goods. For Tehran, the port is a lifeline to global reintegration, countering decades of Western isolation. Fathali, emphasizing its regional pivot, said: "We believe Chabahar can become a vital hub connecting Central Asia to open waters." The port project dates back to the 1970s, when Iran's last Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, proposed it as a deep-sea hub in the Gulf of Oman. During the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran and subsequent leadership transitions, work on the project slowed down. In the 1980s, when the Iran-Iraq War left Iran's Persian Gulf routes vulnerable, Iran doubled up its focus to shift its trade and expand Chabahar. When India entered talks to develop the port around 2003, it mainly meant access to Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan.

— **Ismat Ara**

IAF eyes heavy-lift airship at 30k ft for border surveillance

Surendra.Singh
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Aiming to boost the country's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has started work on a plan to build an unmanned airship for carrying out long-endurance monitoring missions.

The IAF has invited bids from domestic defence companies to design, develop and manufacture a 'Medium Altitude Heavy Lift Airship' that can operate at an altitude of "10,000 feet from sea level (up to 30,000 ft above mean sea level) and can carry payload at least 2,000 kg (up to 5,000 kg desirable)".

Such an airship should be capable of operating in Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System, NAVIC (desi navigation system) and also under GNSS-denied environment. In the future, such an airship can be a launch platform for projectiles and drones.

The induction of such a platform will be a force-multiplier for the IAF as it will boost monitoring of India's sensitive and long borders, and alert forces against incursions and drone threats.

40 Maoists, including Deva's 2nd in command, lay down arms

U.Sudhakarreddy
@timesofindia.com

Hyderabad: Around 40 Maoists, including top commander Sodi Keshalu alias Sodi Kesha, have surrendered before Telangana Police.

With this surrender, police sources said there are no Maoist cadres currently operating on the ground in Telangana, and that the remaining cadres are confined to Chhattisgarh.

Keshalu was considered the second-in-command to PLGA chief Badise Deva, who had surrendered earlier.

Police sources said some cadres still remain in Chhattisgarh, and efforts are continuing to trace more weapons, dens and arm dumps.

Telangana Police officials are expected to formally present the surrendered Maoists in the next few days.

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Source: Research matters (2025)

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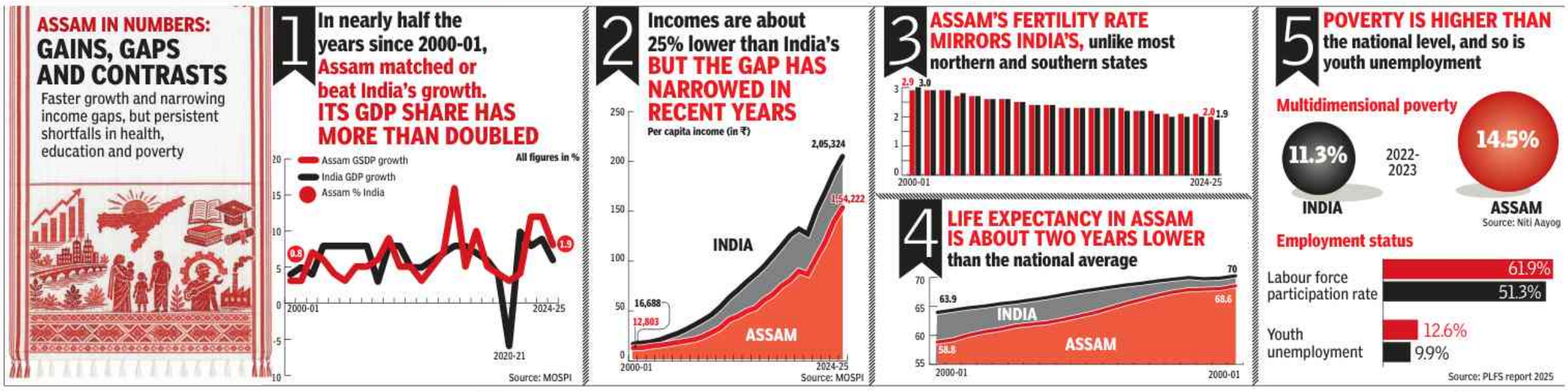


Mama, Miya: Here We Go Again

There's more at stake for Sarma than a second stint as CM: His personal brand

Prabin.Kalita@timesofindia.com

BISWA GURU: Sarma has promised to deliver for BJP its biggest win in Assam

Guwahati: This Feb, Assam BJP uploaded a video that drew immediate protest from opposition parties, triggered outrage in sections of civil society, and led to petitions being filed in Supreme Court and Gauhati high court.

The video — an edit that combined a photo of CM Himanta Biswa Sarma taking aim with an air pistol at a sports complex with a bullet moving in the direction of a man wearing a skull cap — was later taken down.

There would, however, be no clarification or climbdown from a CM who has built his political fortunes around removing undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants – who are referred to locally as "miyas" – from Assam. In Jan, he told the media he and BJP are "openly against miyas" and that his job is "to make miyas suffer" so they eventually leave.

Last week, replying to questions on whether he would move to national politics, Sarma said it would not be before "I break the backbones of those I've taught a lesson to", again referring to Bangladesh-origin migrants.

As he seeks a second term as CM, the anti-miya tirade, the no-holds-barred approach, the strong welfare pitch, and the *jati, mati, bheti* (identity, land, homeland) pitch have all become building blocks for 'brand Himanta'.

There aren't many BJP CMs whose personal brand transcends the party's. Yogi Adityanath can claim to be an exception. Sarma is out to prove he is, too. As a veteran northeast strategist, Sarma has helped shape many a poll victory for Congress, his earlier party, and BJP. But this is the first election where 'brand Himanta' is front and centre, the CM casting himself as master of welfare politics and champion of Assamese identity. Unlike earlier elections where BJP leaned heavily on PM Narendra Modi, it's Sarma who is leading the charge for all NDA parties like AGP, BPF and UPPL and has taken up the responsibility of ensuring the coalition's reach extends deep into tribal and indigenous constituencies.

That's because for Sarma, this isn't just an election to return to office but to win bigger than ever. He has promised to take BJP, which won 60 seats in the last two polls, past the majority mark of 64 by itself. Of Assam's 126 assembly seats, he has publicly predicted, 103 will be won by indigenous candidates.

The identity pitch

Since he took office, his govt's eviction drives, targeting encroachers on forest and state-owned lands, have largely affected Muslims of Bangladeshi origin. Simultaneously, land pattas were distributed to indigenous landless families and descendants of tea garden workers. At the same time, Sarma has lost no opportunity to point out that there are 50 lakh bighas of encroached land holdings in Assam, of which only 1.5 lakh bighas have been cleared.

Sarma has also sharpened his attack on Congress, ridiculing its principal election slogan of building a 'Notun Bor Axom (New Greater Assam)' and accusing APCC chief Gaurav Gogoi of attempting to redefine the state's cultural identity by suggesting indigenous Assamese people should live alongside Bangladeshi-origin people. Central to Sarma's campaign narrative is his prediction that Assam's Muslim population will rise to 40%, up from 34% in the 2011 Census, by 2027.

Author and social commentator Mayur Bora says, "Sarma's brand of politics has two sides. One is his immense ability to work hard. We have seen infrastructure development on a scale not witnessed in decades, and that deserves appreciation. The other side is his attempt to become Hindutva's poster boy, bringing a divisive streak unprecedented in Assam, the land of Sankaradeva and Ajan Fakir. That is deeply sad and unfortunate. This has polluted the political environment. The mentality it fosters may outlive the individual, leaving behind sharper divides between Hindus and Muslims."

The welfare pitch

Sarma's welfare plan has been carefully laid out. Financial aid for women, youth empowerment programmes, scholarships for students, support for entrepreneurs, one-time assistance for tea garden workers and funds for *namghars* (prayer houses) — it touches every segment of society. The line Sarma has taken is that these schemes are rooted in compassion, not politics. "These are not freebies," he has said.

The optics of Sarma's campaign, too, are well planned. In Lakhimpur, a woman kissing him on the cheek during a rally set the tone for visuals of the CM being hugged and showered with affection by women supporters. Women, who form nearly 50% of the state's electorate, have emerged as Sarma's most loyal constituency, thanks to cash transfers, scholarships, empowerment schemes, and recruitment drives that opened doors for women from poor families.

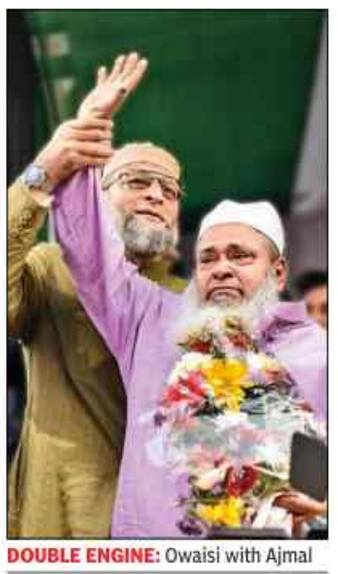
To express his gratitude to them, Sarma says, "From mothers to children and elders, everyone showers me with love and affection... it is only through years of penance that one receives such love."

On social media, Sarma is the most followed CM in India, and the "mama" (uncle) tag has become part of his political branding. It serves another purpose — a nickname that softens his strongman image.

Seeking to retain the Jalukbari seat for the sixth time in a row, Sarma says this time 85-90% of the electorate will vote for him. Pre-delimitation, Jalukbari was a mixed urban rural constituency where Sarma's dominance was already unchallenged, culminating in a 2021 landslide win with 77% vote share. After delimitation, Jalukbari has added 40,000 more voters and is now more urban-suburban in profile with central Guwahati wards shifted out and new peri-urban areas added. It's a change that is seen to favour Sarma. And across Assam, a change that Sarma sees as favouring BJP.

For plucky perfume baron, it's a battle to regain lost ground

Prabin.Kalita@timesofindia.com



DOUBLE ENGINE: Owaisi with Ajmal

Guwahati: After winning 16 seats in 2021, AIUDF and its leader, Badruddin Ajmal, appeared to have emerged as the counter pole to Himanta Biswa Sarma. The outfit embodied the political awakening of Assam's Bangladeshi-origin Muslim immigrants.

A lot has changed in five years. AIUDF is no longer a Congress ally, Ajmal finds his aura diminished after a heavy defeat (by more than 10 lakh votes) to Congress in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, and delimitation has changed the arithmetic in AIUDF bastions. A five-year-old party, the Akhil Gogoi-led Raijor Dal, is seen to be eating into the AIUDF base.

Recently, responding to the CM's remark about "breaking the backbones" of 'miyas' in the state, Ajmal responded by saying "not Himanta but miya dadagiri will prevail in Assam" after the assembly polls.

The 2026 election may feel like a battle for survival for AIUDF, but the perfume baron hasn't lost his pluck. Within the party, the assessment after Ajmal's Dhubri defeat in 2024 was that AIUDF was in its weakest phase since inception in 2006. "Ajmal lost his bastion in a wave where 91% of Muslims of the country voted for INDIA bloc," says Champak Kalita, general secretary of AIUDF's central committee.

But Congress, Kalita insists, has lost momentum after defeat in Bihar and AIUDF can gain from it. "After losing Dhubri, public opinion was not in our favour. But after the Bihar election, there has been a paradigm shift. Momentum has returned and people now feel Congress has weakened and cannot form govt. They are returning to AIUDF. We have regained ground."

Kalita terms the delimitation exercise, which has reduced the number of seats where Muslim voters hold decisive sway, "unconstitutional". The party is contesting 29 seats and hopes to win 22-25.

Former military intelligence officer and political observer Brig Ranjit Borthakur (retd) says Ajmal and AIUDF "certainly have their backs against the wall".

"We have seen that Muslims rejected him in the Lok Sabha election in his backyard. The fact that AIUDF voted for an NDA candidate (in Rajya Sabha) creates doubts that Ajmal might have some kind of understanding with Sarma," Borthakur says. "Ajmal's popularity has waned because he projected himself as representative of the miya community but has not been successful in delivering much. People have realised this. Secondly, many miya families have benefited from the BJP govt's welfare schemes. A section of Muslims here might vote in favour of BJP."

Locally, Bangladeshi-origin Muslim immigrants are called 'miya', separating them from indigenous Muslim communities like Gorias, Moriyas, Jolhas, Deshis and Syeds. These communities number around 40 lakh, which is one-third of the state's total Muslim population.

As he goes back to the drawing board, Ajmal has also returned to the place he made his assembly debut from in 2006. Then known as Jamunamukh, the reconfigured post-delimitation constituency is now known as Binnakandi. It retains its Muslim-majority demographic character.

"Ajmal's presence in the assembly is vital. When he is in the assembly and all our other MLAs are standing behind him, Sarma will not have the courage to abuse miyas," says Kalita. "If a non-BJP govt is formed, AIUDF will extend unconditional support. If BJP wins, our MLAs will protest and stand up against any injustice done like eviction of Muslim people" he adds.

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi is campaigning extensively for Ajmal, the rallies drawing large crowds with "miya zindabad" slogans. "I have come to Assam for a special purpose. To speak for the rights and protection of miya Muslims," he has said.

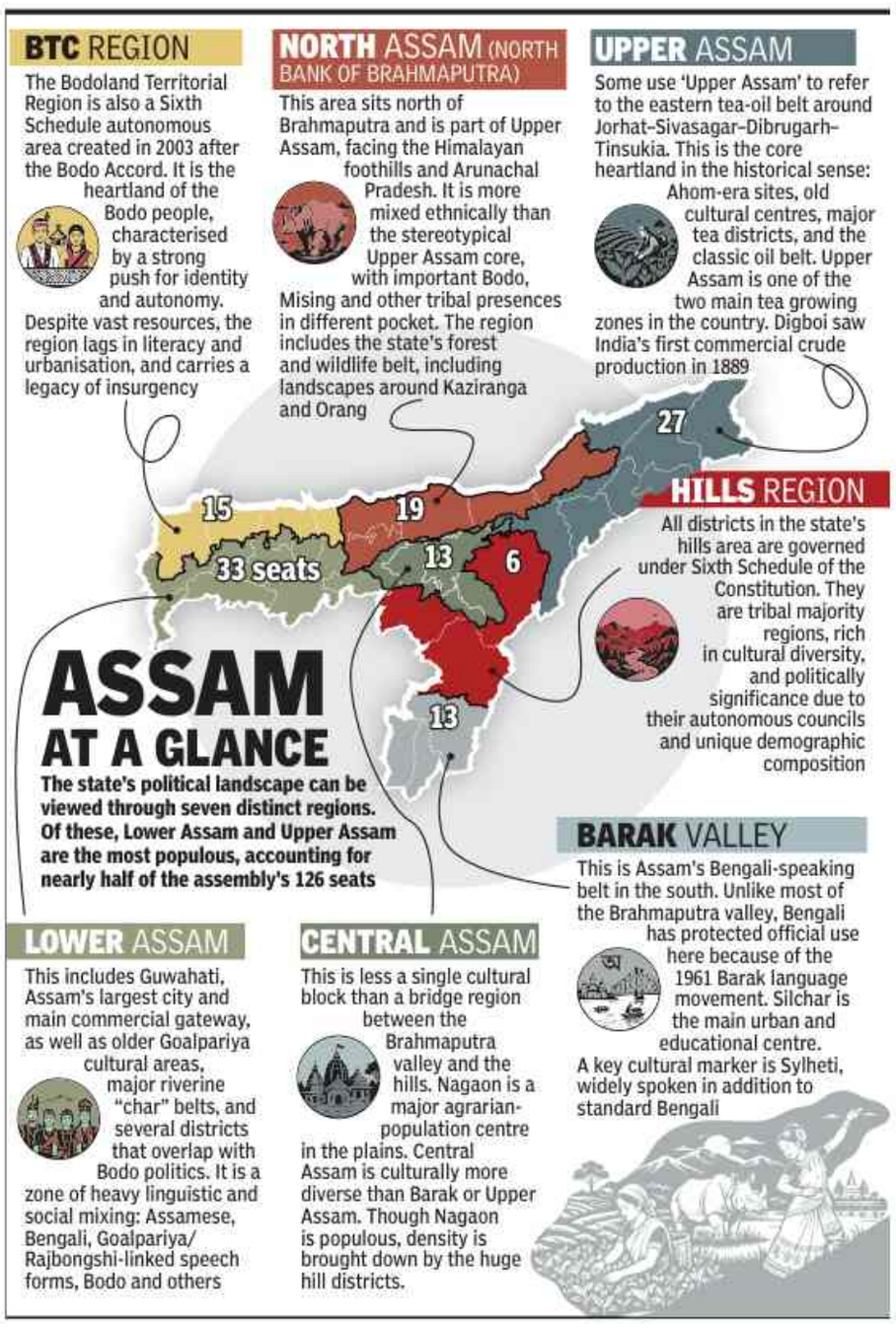
Addressing a rally at Binnakandi, Owaisi accused BJP of indulging in "hate politics" and Congress of being "silent" against it. He called the state govt's eviction drives "unconstitutional", and "a violation of human rights".

Four decades ago, a similar pro-immigrant party story had unfolded. United Minorities Front had emerged in 1985 after the Assam Accord. In its debut election, it made a strong entry with 17 seats. By 2001, it failed to win any seats. In 2005, UMF's netas joined a new party — AIUDF.

POLL POURRI

1,30,197 Votes | The highest winning margin by anyone in an assembly election in Assam. In the 2016 polls, Atul Bora (BJP) defeated Akon Bora (Congress) in Dispur. Atul polled 1,98,378 votes while Akon managed only 68,181

42 Votes | The narrowest margin in the Assam assembly elections. In 2016, Kishore Nath (BJP) defeated Misbahul Islam Laskar (Independent) in Borkhola. Nath got 36,482 votes and Misbahul 36,440


ASSAM
AT A GLANCE
The state's political landscape can be viewed through seven distinct regions. Of these, Lower Assam and Upper Assam are the most populous, accounting for nearly half of the assembly's 126 seats
BTC REGION
The Bodoland Territorial Region is also a Sixth Schedule autonomous area created in 2003 after the Bodo Accord. It is the heartland of the Bodo people, characterised by a strong push for identity and autonomy. Despite vast resources, the region lags in literacy and urbanisation, and carries a legacy of insurgency
NORTH ASSAM (NORTH BANK OF BRAHMAPUTRA)
This area sits north of Brahmaputra and is part of Upper Assam, facing the Himalayan foothills and Arunachal Pradesh. It is more mixed ethnically than the stereotypical Upper Assam core, with important Bodo, Mising and other tribal presences in different pocket. The region includes the state's forest and wildlife belt, including landscapes around Kaziranga and Orang
UPPER ASSAM
Some use 'Upper Assam' to refer to the eastern tea-oil belt around Jorhat-Sivasagar-Dibrugarh-Tinsukia. This is the core heartland in the historical sense: Ahom-era sites, old cultural centres, major tea districts, and the classic oil belt. Upper Assam is one of the two main tea growing zones in the country. Digboi saw India's first commercial crude production in 1889
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13
6
13
33 seats
HILLS REGION
All districts in the state's hills area are governed under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. They are tribal majority regions, rich in cultural diversity, and politically significance due to their autonomous councils and unique demographic composition
BARAK VALLEY
This is Assam's Bengali-speaking belt in the south. Unlike most of the Brahmaputra valley, Bengali has protected official use here because of the 1961 Barak language movement. Silchar is the main urban and educational centre. A key cultural marker is Sylheti, widely spoken in addition to standard Bengali
LOWER ASSAM
This includes Guwahati, Assam's largest city and main commercial gateway, as well as older Goalpariya cultural areas, major riverine "char" belts, and several districts that overlap with Bodo politics. It is a zone of heavy linguistic and social mixing: Assamese, Bengali, Goalpariya/ Rajbongshi-linked speech forms, Bodo and others
CENTRAL ASSAM
This is less a single cultural block than a bridge region between the Brahmaputra valley and the hills. Nagaon is a major agrarian-population centre in the plains. Central Assam is culturally more diverse than Barak or Upper Assam. Though Nagaon is populous, density is brought down by the huge hill districts.

From how it travels to where it parties, Guwahati's changing: Can politics keep up?

Prajanma Das & Kangkan Kalita | TNN

Subhojyoti Kanjilal

MAKING MOVES: After-party clubs are the new rage in Guwahati; (above) the 1.8km-long cable car crosses the Brahmaputra in 9 minutes

As EDM floods the room, people push through a crowd, trying to find space to sway on a dance floor. Some cheer when a server turns up with a tray full of drinks, others pass a sheesha pipe.

It is 2am in Guwahati. And the night is just beginning.

Open till 6am, these after-party clubs epitomise the changing face of the city, which is embracing a template of urban aspiration.

Varun Vohra, F&B COO of a 3-star hotel and a professional DJ, says, "There used to be only one club here; it was in a 4-star hotel. Around 15 clubs have opened over the years. There are also about 100 bars in the city."

The target demographic has also changed. While earlier establishments mainly catered to the non-Assamese population from high income brackets, locals have now become part of the nightlife.

Yoorisa Pde, who owns a café in Uzan Bazar, says there has been a steady rise in the number of visitors over the years. "Many now prefer the relaxed vibe of cafés over that of restaurants, where the setting is more formal," she says, of the shift in the Assam capital towards the culture of a metropolitan city.

Uzan Bazar is now a foodie hotspot, with street stalls, pocket-friendly cafés and even bungalows refurbished as eateries, serving everything from dosa to handmade pasta to matcha. Some also encourage professionals working from home to set up their laptops there.

Employment opportunities in the hospitality industry have increased as the demand for baristas, chefs and bartenders rises. This has created jobs and raised aspirations and, in election season, expectations from political parties to bring more development projects and employment to local youths.

"People who had skills did not have a place to work. They had to leave the state even if they wanted to stay with their families. But now, there's space. People are willing to come back home," says Yoosari. "There are around seven 5-star hotels coming up in and around the city. This will help many people from the region find jobs closer to home," Varun says.

Alongside its lifestyle shift, there has also been a visible infrastructural transformation across Guwahati over the years, with a total of 30 bridges and flyovers built.

Guwahati also has another mode of transportation that can make urban mobility simpler — India's longest cable car. While it is used by 650–700 tourists every day, govt is looking at the ropeway as a viable option for daily commuters. Hundreds cross the Brahmaputra on the 20-minute ferry but during the monsoon, they are in a fix. The 1.8km-long cable car crosses the river in 9 minutes.

"The ropeway is an option when the Brahmaputra swells, but it has to be subsidised," says Nitu Moni Das, a travel guide. Echoing this, Raktim Buragohain, a trader, says, "It's fast, smooth, and you can enjoy a great view. But it's impractical if the ticket price isn't reduced."

A one-way trip costs Rs 100, compared to Rs 6 on the ferry.

Change also comes at a price — at some places, the development is hurried, haphazard, and the pressure of traffic mounts every day. Maharaja Prithu flyover was inaugurated on March 10, just before EC announced the poll date, and the work is incomplete. It is the same for Kumar Bhaskar Varma bridge. Sanjiv Shyam, chief engineer, PWD (roads), says govt had to ensure Maharaja Prithu flyover did not affect structures like Burha Jame Masjid. But residents say roads are too narrow to divert traffic.

Insurgency to industry

In 1979, Assam saw the rise of Ulfa, formed over grievances about resources being exploited. But the organisation began hurting the people it claimed to be fighting for. Pipeline bombings, kidnappings and extortion bled the state dry. Investors fled. Tea gardens paid "taxes" to militants.

Decades on, Upper Assam is seeing the emergence of industry — from the world's first 2G bamboo-based bioethanol plant in Golaghat district's Numaligarh to the Rs 11,000-crore ammonia-urea project in Dibrugarh district's Namrup.

Abhishek Singha, founder of NGO All & Sundry, said, "We hope the bioethanol plant promotes sustainable green energy." Creation of jobs would reduce migration to metros, he added.

Ishantor Sobhapandit, NER regional director at Indian Chamber of Commerce, said, "While one project focuses on fertiliser security, cuts down import dependence, and revitalises a legacy industrial hub, another links rural populations with a green energy economy."

BJP neta and Assam Chamber of Commerce chairman Rupam Goswami also pointed to the Rs 27,000-crore semiconductor plant under construction in Jagiroad.

IMD predicts cooler temps in north-west India, rain likely

2 Western Disturbances Expected

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Two western disturbances in quick succession are likely to affect north-west India this week with peak activity on April 7-8, resulting in below normal to near normal day temperatures over the region and a wet spell, IMD said on Sunday.

Western disturbance (WD) is an extratropical cyclone, originating in the Mediterranean region, that brings sudden rains and snow to the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent.

IMD further said day temperatures are likely to remain below normal to near normal over most parts of the country during the next seven days due to various weather phenomena in different parts, ranging from WD in north-west, cyclonic circulation over west central Bay of Bengal off south coastal Andhra Pradesh in lower tropospheric levels to an upper-air cyclonic circulation over Rayalaseema and a trough running from this upper-air cyclonic circulation to Gulf of Mannar.

These factors will result in wet spell activity with thunderstorm and lightning over central, east and peninsular India till April 9. States which may face such weather include Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, Bihar and Jharkhand.

The IMD said maximum (day) temperatures would rise by 2-4 degree Celsius over north-west India till April 6 but "gradual fall by 2-4 degree C" on April 7-8, and "gradual rise by 2-4 degree C" during April 9-11.

PTI

States which may face such weather include Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, sub-Himalayan Bengal and Sikkim, Bihar and Jharkhand

Chouhan calls for review of crop damage

New Delhi: Taking cognizance of excessive rainfall and hailstorms in several states in March, Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Sunday directed officials to review the crop damage caused by the-se extreme weather events.

He held discussions with agriculture ministers of the states concerned over the issue and assured them of adequate central assistance to compensate farmers for crop loss.

Preliminary findings show damage to standing crops in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, parts of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal and north-eastern states. The crops affected in these states are mainly wheat and mustard, while it is apple in Himachal. TNN

Court denies bail to judicial officer for theft from fellow judge's home the day he died

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Chandigarh: A court in Patiala denied anticipatory bail to a serving judicial officer accused of stealing gold, jewellery and cash from the residence of an additional sessions judge, now deceased, observing the seriousness of allegations and need for custodial interrogation.

Quoting Supreme Court rulings in such matters, the court observed that no person, whatever his rank or designation, was above the law and he must face the penal consequences of infraction of criminal law. "The offence alleged strikes at the integrity expected from a public servant, more particularly a judicial officer," the court observed.

Court said the facts and circumstances of the case, gravity of allegations, prima facie material in the form of CCTV footage, absence of convincing material supporting lawful possession and requirement of recovery of substantial property suggested grant of anticipatory bail would adversely affect the investigation.

Patiala additional sessions judge Harinder Sidhu passed these orders while dismissing the anticipatory bail petition filed by Bikramdeep Singh, a 39-year-old judicial officer named in an FIR registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) on March 21.

Petition in apex court challenges amended transgender persons law

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New Delhi: Less than a week after the controversial Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026, was notified as law, a writ petition has been filed before the Supreme Court challenging its constitutional validity. The bill to amend the 2019 law was passed by the Lok Sabha on March 24 and Rajya Sabha on March 25 with a voice vote, amid strong objections from the Opposition. that demanded that the bill be referred to a standing committee.

The petition challenging the law has been filed by well-known transgender rights activists Laxmi Narayan Tripathi and Zainab Patel. Incidentally, Tripathi and Patel were lead petitioners in the landmark NALSA v. Union of India (2014) case, which saw SC recognising the rights of transgender persons under the Constitution.

In their current petition, the activists have argued, that the 2026 amendments alter the foundation of how transgender identity is understood in law. "It moves away from self-identification and replaces it with a narrow, state-driven definition based on fixed categories and medical conditions," the activists said. "This law takes us backwards. In NALSA, Supreme Court affirmed that our identity comes from within, not from a checklist created by the State. Today, that core principle is being undone. As petitioners in that very case, we have returned to the court because this law does not just change definitions, it changes lives. It risks pushing many transgender persons outside the protection of law," Tripathi and Patel said in a joint statement.

The plea has been filed by well-known transgender rights activists Laxmi Narayan Tripathi and Zainab Patel, who were also lead petitioners in the landmark NALSA versus Union of India (2014) case

MP woman to be placed under 'Shourya Didi' framework

▶ Continued from page 1

Before permitting her to live with a man other than her husband, the judges directed that the woman be placed under the state's Shourya Didi framework for six months.

Gyanani and a woman constable named Bhavna, who had produced the woman in court, were appointed as her Shourya Didis.

The concept, evolved by the Gwalior bench in the 2024 case of Harchand Gurjar vs State of Madhya Pradesh, envisages a female police officer or a fit person under the Juvenile Justice Act as a mentor and support figure for women and girls in vulnerable situations, particularly victims of sexual offences, girls in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law.

Women's rights & religion: Centre backs review petitions

▶ Continued from page 1

The judgment had invited a series of petitions seeking its review and activated cries for similar rulings on PILs which had sought entry of women into mosques, abolition of the practice of khatna (female genital mutilation or FGN) among Dawoodi Bohra community members, and pleas for entry of Parsi women, who have married non-Parsis, into Agiyari (fire temple). The Centre has lent its support to the review petitions.

Top court's 2018 judgment had struck down the Sabarimala shrine's tradition of not permitting the entry of female worshippers in the 10-50 age group, a faith-based belief that the presiding deity Ayyappa is a "naishtik brahmachari".

CJI Kant is the only judge still in service, from the nine-judge bench led by then CJI S A Bobde which first heard the matter in 2020. That nine-judge bench comprised CJI Bobde, and Justices R Banumathi, Ashok Bhushan, L Nageswara Rao, M M Shantanagoudar, S Abdul Nazeer, R Subhash Reddy, B R Gavai and Kant.

On Nov 14, 2019, a five-judge bench led by then CJI Ranjan Gogoi, by a three-to-two majority, had not disturbed the Sept 28 judgment allowing the entry of women of all ages but referred to a seven-judge bench the task of evolving guidelines for deciding cases involving clash of fundamental rights and faith emerging from women's entry to temples, mosques and agiyaris.

Rera: Buyers promised international standard homes, project unfit

▶ Continued from page 1

After taking possession in Oct 2019, Garg soon complained about cracked tiles, uneven flooring and damage in balconies and common areas. According to the order, these defects were repeatedly flagged to the developer, but were not adequately addressed.

The case acquired far greater significance after the Tower D collapse. District-level inquiries and structural audits, including by IIT-Delhi, found widespread corrosion in reinforcement steel in multiple towers. The damage was linked to chlorides embedded in the concrete during construction. Experts concluded that the deterioration was so advanced that repairs were neither technically sound nor economically viable. In its March 30 order, Rera adjudicating officer Rajender Kumar said the allottee could not be faulted for the defects and that it was "the sole responsibility of the respondent to construct the project as per prescribed norms". Rera also noted that buyers had been promised construction of "international standards", but the project had effectively become unfit for habitation.

The authority also examined the two broad options discussed earlier for affected buyers — compensation or reconstruction. The developer was unwilling to reconstruct, while Garg opposed the Rs 7,500 per sqft benchmark suggested under committee recommendations, arguing that it did not reflect current market realities.

Rera accepted that property values in Sector 109 had risen sharply between 2022 and 2026 and recalculated compensation at Rs 13,000 per sqft. On that basis, it awarded Garg Rs4 crore, inclusive of the amount already paid for the flat. It also asked the developer to refund Rs 4.6 lakh paid as stamp duty, pay Rs 2 lakh for mental agony and harassment, and Rs 50,000 towards litigation costs.

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CONTRAPUNTO

Not only is there no God, but try finding a plumber on Sunday

– WOODY ALLEN

Malayali Vibes

With development, come contradictions, the Kerala kind. Thursday will see electors vote strategically

Come Thursday, Kerala votes. And they must choose, in the main, between incumbent, CPM-led LDF, and opposition bloc, Congress-led UDF. What are the differentiators between the two in the state that is, undoubtedly, India's most remarkable development story? Consecutive govts in Kerala have ensured high minimum wages, road expansion, strong trade and labour unions, land reforms, as well as investment in clean water, sanitation, housing, access to food, public health, and education. Kerala has had a continuity in public development. So, what's in the manifesto for the voter this time? What are the differentiators? Hard to tell. Because, both LDF and UDF have overlapping agendas with common priorities – welfare schemes (especially healthcare), improved MSP, increase in pensions, elder care outlay, infra projects. In 2021, CPM and Congress had exact vote shares, 25% each. So, this election winds down to – no one can tell quite what, which makes it a close call, with BJP playing Team B, 'vote-cutter', or spoilsport, depending on the analyst's side of the aisle.

Kerala is, hands down, among the most politically aware, and hotheaded, electorates in the country, on par with Bengal when it comes to political violence – grisly murders of party workers, tit-for-tat attacks between, mostly, Left and RSS workers. Political violence endures despite high literacy and cosy Gulf remittances – which Trump's war on Iran haven't impacted yet. In fact, violence of every kind – caste to ideological to domestic – endures. This is remarkable, too, for a state that saw the earliest rebellions against caste, a matrilineal society, a far better women's labourforce participation, relative to India's average. Yet, the toxic male chauvinism of Malayali filmworld, as exposed by the Hema Committee report, reflects its society. That there is little political fallout for MLAs accused of sexual misconduct, speaks for itself.

What will also impact outcomes is the fact that in a rare instance, one out of five electors is an elderly. The usual stream of Gulf migrants who head home to vote is missing. But the most significant factor in 2026, is a perceived breakdown of the secular compact that existed between Kerala state and its sizeable minority populations – Muslims about 26%, and Christians about 19%. BJP's Hindu consolidation is a runaway project, and minorities will be voting strategically – how to keep BJP out. But given minority blocs aren't necessarily on the same page, it could augur well for incumbents, regardless deathbed predictions for LDF. The country watches, as Kerala heads into an election, as a state, and a political fraternity, full of contradictions, despite all its successes.

Poopular Mechanics

Apollo to Artemis, plumbing is space travel's Achilles' heel – there are 96 bags of human poop on Moon

Forget Mars. It's not happening. You might make bulletproof rockets and cosmic wave shields, but where's the toilet to last the trip? After 50 years of trying, the best we've got is the $30mn UWMS – Universal Waste Management System – that broke down as soon as Nasa's Artemis II mission started, and has proven buggy on the way, too. The crew are lucky they've got "space plumber" Christina Koch with them on the 10-day mission. But Mars is at least a nine-month journey one way. You'd need a crew hired entirely from Kendrapara – India's plumber nursery – to make it there, and back.

Then what? You could be on a plane that's forced to turn back midway, due to choked toilets. Truly, when it comes to human flight, fate is faecal. One time, 11 of a plane's 12 toilets were choked. International Space Station has only four. The most ironic plane tale is from Jan 2018, when a Norwegian flight to Munich U-turned after 20 minutes due to choked toilets. It had 85 plumbers on board. That same year, in a village near Gurgaon, a large and icy "meteorite", weighing 10-12kg, fell. It turned out to be "blue ice" – frozen waste from a plane lavatory. Blue ice is not a joke. It smashed a woman's shoulder in MP, in 2016, cracks a few roofs every year, and once knifed off a plane's engine at 35,000ft.

All because we can't stop plane loos from leaking. But it's a lot worse on spacecraft. In declassified files from 1969's Apollo 10 mission, astronauts are heard asking for napkins to catch faeces floating around the cabin. Nasa shuttle Discovery's waste system failed on 10 of its first 11 missions and needed a $12mn fix. As late as 2021, SpaceX's Crew Dragon spacecraft had a malfunction. Still think Mars is doable? All the best, but we're staying.

Food (only) for thought

At airports, our cravings worsen with the prices

Milind Ghatwai

Of all the disappointments in life, nothing is bigger than being told by a polite airport lounge staffer, that your credit card is no longer eligible for complimentary food. He doesn't have to be discourteous to twist the knife. The more polite he is, the deeper is the wound. Then you remember, the pesky caller from your bank had offered to upgrade the card. But you had cut her off instantly and rudely. Karma catches up at the most inopportune moment, especially at airports, where, inexplicably, you covet food even when not exactly hungry.

The reason why you had trekked to the lounge, was the otherwise extortionate price of food and beverages. A loss of face later, as you begin the long walk back, an attractive caramel panna cotta tempts you, even though, generally, you would have dismissed it like terracotta. In the airport atmosphere, your sweet tooth grows in power.

Unless you are an executive travelling on your company's expense, or a junket, or a honeymooner, airport food feels super overpriced. Even as your tummy rumbles abnormally. This is the closest men come to experiencing pregnancy cravings. And your taste buds become more active, the more you wait for boarding. Especially when you see someone returning from the lounge, with a satisfied look, coffee cup in one hand, and a sandwich in the other.

You are vaguely aware that plans are afoot, to sell economical food items at some airports.

Furtive glances provide no hint of any such kiosk. You also realise that stuff was relatively cheaper at the counters in the check-in area. Rates increase as you near the aircraft. Worse, as you have not pre-booked a meal, your sensory ordeal won't end after boarding the flight. As luck would have it, the passenger next to you is on an 'official trip'. So, the sound of the approaching food trolley doesn't make *her* uncomfortable. You get a glass of water, she gets a neat tray. You scan the in-flight magazine, stare at the clouds. But out of sight is not always out of mind. The aroma wafting from such close quarters is nothing short of air turbulence.

On your next trip, you try to enter the lounge with an upgraded card, only to run into a long queue of people carrying more than one eligible card. Boarding announcements begin even before you reach the staffer.

Deadline Here, Now What?

War isn't ending because both US and Iran want to claim victory. To win decisively, Trump needs boots on the ground, but that's risky. Bombing Iran infra to bits won't dismantle Iranian regime. Extending deadline again will be read as sign of Trump's weakness

Jane Kinninmont

Columnist based in London

Five weeks into the illegal US and Israeli war on Iran, escalation seems to be the direction of travel. Hours before his 'deadline' lapses, Trump's Truth Social post, using profanity, showed a president ruffled like rarely before. Trump's inconsistent statements leave various options open: he spoke of "bombing Iran back to the stone ages", yet says war will be over very soon. That comes even as thousands of US soldiers are arriving in the region, raising the possibility of boots on the ground inside Iran.

Trump may want to retain the option of declaring victory and walking away, after wreaking further damage on Iran's infra, saying he has destroyed Iran's ability to be a military player outside its own borders. But clearly, this scenario will be more complicated to achieve if US personnel become prisoners of war – not improbable after last week's F-15 crash, and the tense rescue of one of its pilots – or if Iran retains a stranglehold on Strait of Hormuz.

That's one reason why Trump wants to say that the Strait is everyone's problem except his. US allies aren't buying that. Indeed, the unilateral and unpopular nature of this war is a strategic weakness for US. There are already plenty of US and European commentators suggesting US is losing – a narrative that Iranian officials are seeking to capitalise on with well-targeted public statements using social media, memes, and AI-generated videos.

This conveniently overlooks the losses Iran has suffered – physically and economically – in terms of damage to infra and military, collapse of its deterrence against Israel since Oct 7, 2023, loss of multiple senior strategists, and in its regional relationships as it burns bridges with Gulf neighbours. While both US and Iranian leaders keep claiming they're winning, there are heavy losses on both sides, and "victory" is a relative concept.

Iran is fighting a classic asymmetric war: it is militarily weaker but is trying to capitalise on this underdog status so that it's seen as succeeding just by surviving against a much larger aggressor. It's also increasing the costs of war by attacking non-combatants and drawing more countries into the conflict by targeting Gulf states and shipping.

This was initially designed to impose costs on regional powers and the global economy, thereby increasing pressure on US for a ceasefire. But now that Iran has a taste of power over the Strait of Hormuz, its leaders are considering a larger ambition to keep permanent control over this maritime chokepoint, and use it as a long-term source of revenue.

Gulf states are saying they cannot live with that – that it will be intolerable if war ends with Iran maintaining the ability to threaten them, and global shipping, at will. Bahrain is working on a UN Security Council Resolution that would authorise "defensive" deployment to protect shipping in the Strait, but it has run into objections from Russia and China, who do not want to authorise any use of force in this context.

UN is also working on an initiative to open humanitarian corridors through the Strait for food and fertiliser, building on the Black Sea grain deal it mediated with Russia and Ukraine, to limit the awful impacts of war on the hungry around the world. EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, has said EU may be able to help track and facilitate such transit, saying the Strait is a global public good.

But while there is increasing diplomatic activity to find ways to mitigate the energy and food crisis, efforts to mediate between US and Iran are not bearing fruit. The demands of the two sides seem to be getting further apart. Reports over recent days suggest mediation efforts by Egypt and Pakistan have hit a dead end, and Qatar is not enthusiastic to take on a mediation role again. This is particularly worrying as Trump's "deadline" for Iran to reopen the Strait ends today. He said if Iran did not comply, US would bomb its electrical grid. In turn, Iran threatened to bomb Gulf energy infra.

Image: AI

The deadline itself is arbitrary; Trump has already extended it once and could easily do so again; but at a more fundamental level, US and Iran both seem determined to prove they are winning. There could be US military raids inside Iran to go after its hidden stockpile of highly enriched uranium (which Iran was negotiating over when war started).

Iran is militarily weaker, but is trying to capitalise on this underdog status so that it's seen as succeeding just by surviving against a much larger aggressor

US has also suggested it could seize Kharg Island, Iran's main export terminal for oil, which Trump has reminded people he first proposed back in the 1980s. This may be militarily feasible, but would exacerbate the global energy crisis by taking much of Iran's oil off the market.

Meanwhile, Iran has reported a fourth airstrike close to its civilian nuclear power plant at Bushehr, which reportedly killed one of the plant's security officers. This also raises concern about the serious risks of a radiological accident coming into the mix. The high international stakes of this war mean there are good reasons to renew mediation efforts, to try and find ways for the two sides to step back.

The writer is a West Asia expert

Artemis Shows It's No Time To Be Moony

As Artemis II sends four humans towards lunar orbit for the first time in 53 years, the question for New Delhi is no longer whether to dream big in space – but whether it is moving fast enough

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At 3.54am Thurs, a **5.7-mn pound** rocket punched through the Florida sky as Nasa's Artemis II lifted off, carrying Commander Reid Wiseman, Pilot Victor Glover, Mission Specialist Christina Koch, and Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen on a ten-day mission around Moon and back.

India watched. But watching is no longer enough, because Artemis sending astronauts back towards Moon is more than revival of a dormant ambition. It's a powerful signal that space is again a theatre of power. Not power in the old sense of flags and symbolic firsts, but power rooted in infra, alliances, and long-term presence. Beyond a destination, Moon is now domain.

For India, the moment needs parsing. Space has always mirrored geopolitics on Earth. The original lunar race was never just about science. It was about demonstrating technological superiority in the shadow of the Cold War. When US placed humans on Moon, it was as much a political statement as scientific milestone.

That logic is returning, in a more complex form. Today, US is building a coalition-led framework around Moon, anchored by Nasa and formalised through the Artemis Accords. In parallel, China is pursuing its own pathway with partners, centred on International Lunar Research Station.

These are not competing missions. They are competing systems. They will shape how resources are accessed, how orbits are used, how data flows, and who sets the rules. Moon, in that sense, is not the prize. It is, instead, the starting point, for a new strategic geography that extends from cislunar space to Mars and beyond.

India finds itself in an unusual position within this emerging order. It is not outside the system. It has signed the Artemis Accords. It has demonstrated credible capability through Chandrayaan-3. Its space programme commands global respect for reliability and cost efficiency. But, it isn't shaping the system either.

There is a difference between participation and influence. At present, India risks being confined to the former. Part of India's problem lies in the legacy of its own success. For decades, Isro perfected a model built on doing more with less, delivering missions that captured global attention without straining public finances. That approach made sense when space activity was episodic and largely state-driven. Artemis represents a break from that past.

Moon's south pole, where water ice may exist in permanently shadowed craters, is being carved up, not militarily but strategically, through partnerships, frameworks, and technological presence. India has a foothold here that most nations can only envy. Question is, whether, New Delhi will capitalise on it, before the window narrows.

Thursday's liftoff is a single mission, but the programme itself is an architecture: heavy-lift launch systems, a planned lunar orbital station, repeated crewed missions, and a sustained push to build infra on and around Moon. It is designed to endure, not to impress once.

Such a model cannot be built on tight optimisation alone. It requires scale, redundancy, and sustained funding over decades. India's current trajectory does not yet reflect that shift.

Consider the pace of what lies ahead. Human spaceflight under Gaganyaan is still in preparatory stages. Follow-on lunar ambitions remain under definition. Planetary missions are planned, but timelines have a tendency to stretch.

Individually, none of this is unusual – space is inherently complex. But taken together, it points to a programme advancing carefully, not rapidly. That caution carries a cost in a changing environment. Because the second space race is not about who gets there first. It is about who builds first, and stays the longest.

There is also an economic dimension easy to miss. Artemis's framework places private industry at its core. Companies are not peripheral contractors; they are central actors building landers, launch vehicles and orbital platforms. Space is evolving into an economic ecosystem where logistics, manufacturing and resource utilisation will define value.

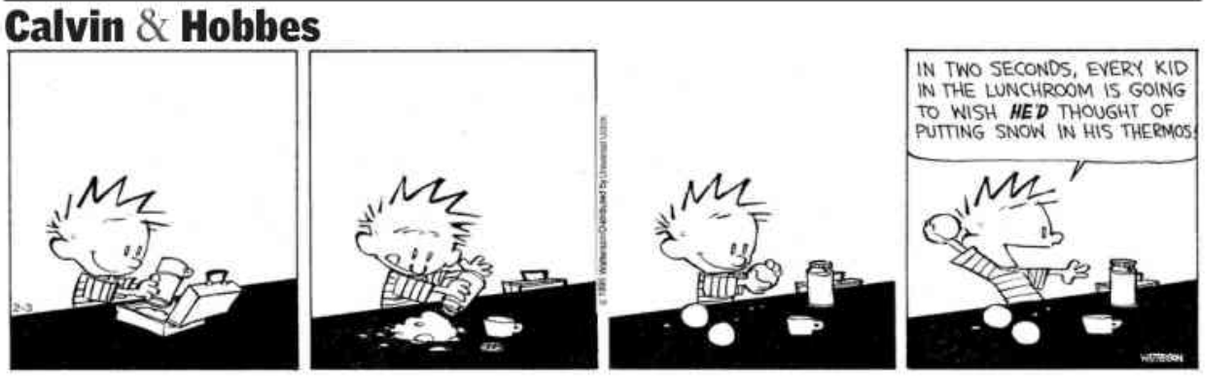
India has begun opening its space sector to private players. Start-ups are emerging and policy signals are positive. But the scale remains modest. Integration with national missions is still evolving. If this gap persists, India risks a paradox: a strong public space programme, alongside an underdeveloped commercial ecosystem, just as the global model shifts decisively towards the latter.

None of this suggests India lacks capability. But capability without strategic direction, leads to drift. And drift, in a moment like this, translates into marginalisation.

Choices made today, about partnerships, funding, and institutional design, will determine whether India helps shape the rules of the emerging space order or merely operates within them. The Artemis launch should be read not as a distant achievement, but as a signal: that space is central to geopolitics, that the era of one-off missions, is giving way to continuous presence, and that the window to define one's role is limited.

India has already proven that it can reach Moon. The question now is whether it intends to matter there. Because in this race, being present won't be enough.

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacred*space*

Sorrow prepares you for joy. It violently sweeps everything out of your house, so that new joy can find space to enter. It shakes the yellow leaves from the bough of your heart, so that fresh, green leaves can grow in their place.

Jalaluddin Rumi

Pain Not Transformed Is Pain Transmitted

Christopher Mendonca

The problem of pain and suffering has baffled humankind from the very beginning. In searching for an answer, we have often confused the problem of pain with the problem of suffering. The two are not necessarily identical. Pain is a sensation whose intensity can be measured. It is nature's way of telling us that we are diseased. This is a pain that we must learn to welcome as an awareness of a dysfunction. They are warning signs that all is not well with us. Those who have a low threshold of pain need to have more care and attention in this regard.

To minimise the discomfort we experience is one thing; to become preoccupied with the removal of pain without considering what it is telling us means we are in danger of taking to the highway with all signposts and warning signs removed. Pain is a useful internal defence mechanism.

There is a kind of pain, however, that is the result of violence inflicted on us from outside. An injury or accident is always unfortunate. But when violence inflicted is intentional, it is symptomatic of a desire to control, to bring into submission the person of the other. It is often hoped that by destroying the body, one can destroy the spirit as well. Then there is the loss of a loved one, scars of abuse in manifold forms, the malignity we are subjected to, disappointments, shattered dreams that are part of our human condition, a sort of violence that is internal. It is at this point that pain and suffering intersect.

THE SPEAKING TREE

Understanding the significance of this intersection is important.

While pain is a product of consciousness, suffering is a by-product of self-consciousness. Our subconscious is neutral, not assigning either positive or negative value to our experiences.

It is our self-conscious ego that will determine whether or not this pain is transformed into suffering that is either positive or negative.

The Cross as a symbol is, by its very nature, an intersection, an intersection between pain and suffering. The commemoration of Easter is meant to revisit and restore the meaning of suffering to its original context. From the Latin *'patior'*, it is a passive verb but with an active meaning. It is better translated as 'let it be done'. To suffer as Jesus did means recognising in awareness the presence of the 'Ego' at this intersection for the illusion that it is. This is his death on the cross that becomes the gateway to *life*. With no ego, there is no victim. The Cross has always been the essential symbol of Christianity; the crucified Christ, perhaps, its most loved caricature.

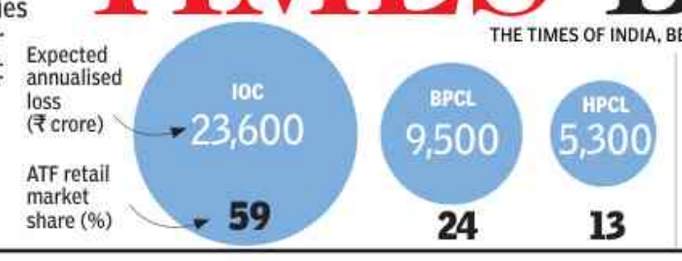
When the body of Jesus was taken down and buried in a tomb, the cross on which he was crucified still stood erect and remained so even on that first Easter morn. It is a silent testimony to the fact that the Risen Christ must coexist with the Cross. Jesus calls his disciples to take up their cross, shorn of ego, and, in so doing, transform the experience of pain through suffering in its positive sense. Without it, we will continue to remain in pain, suffer negatively, and inflict pain on others, since pain not transformed is pain transmitted.

TIMES BUSINESS
THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2026

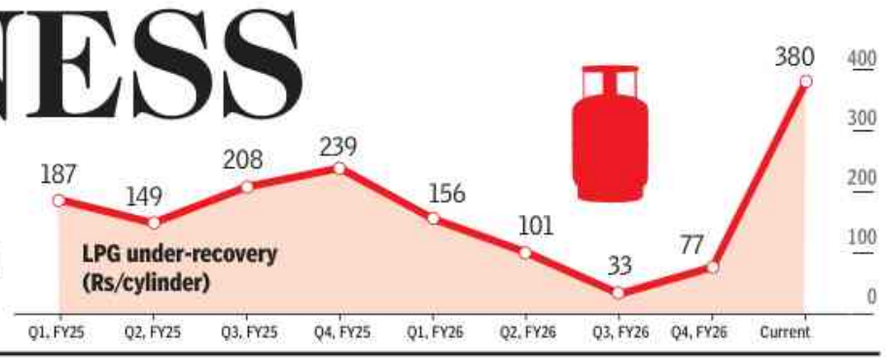
Rise In Under-Recoveries

Despite an 8.5% price hike in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) Wednesday, oil marketing companies (OMCs) are expected to face a loss of ₹64 per litre on sales to domestic airlines, on account of a much sharper rise in global crude oil prices driven by geopolitical tensions, an analysis by Nomura shows. This translates into a marketing loss of about $109/barrel

Source: Nomura



Also, LPG price hike has done little to put an end to the OMCs' losses. While the latest hike may lead to a breakeven in commercial sales, OMCs are now losing ₹380 per domestic cylinder



At MPC meet, focus on how RBI reads inflation, growth

Central Bank May Hold Rates Amid Rising Strain In System

Mayur.Shetty
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Mumbai: At a time when oil prices are over $100, the rupee is under pressure and traders are recalibrating bets, the focus in India's financial markets has shifted to what the central bank will say rather than what it will do. Reserve Bank of India is widely expected to hold rates in its April 8 policy, but the real attention is on how it reads growth, inflation and strain building in the system.

The last set of projections was left deliberately incomplete. In Feb, RBI nudged up its near-term growth estimates, putting Q1 and Q2 of FY27 at 6.9% and 7%, while holding back the full-year forecast until the new GDP series is released. That pause now assumes significance. Since then, the conflict in West Asia has pushed up oil prices, disrupted supply chains and weakened the rupee by nearly 3%, altering the baseline from which those projections will be drawn.

In this setting, policy action appears straightforward, but the messaging does not. Barclays expects the Monetary Policy Committee to keep the repo rate unchanged and retain a neutral stance, while signalling its intent through guidance. "We expect the RBI MPC to keep the policy repo rate on hold in the 8 April meeting and retain the 'neutral' stance. We also await RBI's FY27 growth and inflation estimates (Barclays: 6.8%, 4%). We expect continued liquidity support and timely FX intervention to keep financial conditions stable," said Aastha Gudwani chief economist with Barclays.

"We do not expect any change in repo rate or stance this time. The tone will be cautious and what will be eagerly awaited is RBI's forecast of GDP and inflation under the prevailing uncertainty. We do not expect any measures for either liquidity or currency management as RBI will do whenever required as we have seen of late," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, Bank of Baroda.

The inflation-growth mix is beginning to shift. Icra expects CPI inflation to rise to 4.3% in FY27 from 2.1% in FY26, even as growth shows signs of moderation. "In this context, the Monetary Policy Committee is expected to maintain a pause on policy rates for an extended period, even as growth moderates. The Reserve Bank of India may continue to manage liquidity conditions to support the system," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist, Icra.

According to Soumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economist, SBI, because of exchange rate fluctuations and external shocks like supply chain disruptions, imported inflation is already at 5.4% (215 bps more than the headline) for Feb'26 and is expected to increase considerably further. Consequently, CPI trajectory (as of now) may indicate more than 4.5% inflation for the next 3 quarters. This is still within the 2% tolerance band over the 4% inflation rate.

The other positive on inflation front is the govt's recent decision for full customs duty exemption on a wide range of critical petrochemical products till June 30. It may lower input costs and hence may have benign impact on imported inflation.

Yet, beneath the surface, the currency is driving a different conversation. The rupee's sharp fall has revived the argument for rate action as a defence tool. Higher rates can pull in dollar flows by making rupee assets more attractive, creating an arbitrage that supports the currency. But this is not a conventional cycle.

Analysts say that energy shocks do not lend themselves to standard responses. According to Emkay Global, the earlier policy emphasis was on transmission of past rate cuts, using abundant liquidity to keep overnight rates below the policy rate and ease borrowing conditions. Now the drivers are more diffuse: inflation expectations, growth risks and tighter financial conditions are feeding into the central bank's trade-offs.

MULTIPLE CHALLENGES FOR RBI

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> —**Madan Sabnavis** | CHIEF ECONOMIST, BANK OF BARODA

Crude shock: FMCG, consumer durables cos look to hike prices

Shiva Rajora & Asmita Dey | TNN

New Delhi/Mumbai: High crude oil and input prices have raised cost pressures for packaging materials and petrochemical derivatives, leading to companies in the FMCG and consumer durables sectors mulling price hikes.

In fact, some companies such as Lahori Zeera have already implemented selective price hikes since the start of the month. Edible oil companies across the industry have also raised prices by Rs 4-5 per litre, Nuvama Equities said in a report, while food companies such as Bikaji, Britannia and Nestle may increase prices this quarter due to palm oil inflation. Palm oil prices, which have remained correlated to crude oil over the past seven-eight years, are also likely to increase cost pressures for soap manufacturers such as HUL and Godrej, where palm oil derivatives are a key raw material.

"The ongoing conflict in West Asia has left businesses increasingly vulnerable. On one hand, the looming inflationary pressures are driving up production and packaging costs. At the same time, there is a tangible risk to demand, as consumer sentiment is likely to turn cautious. Additionally, the longer the conflict persists, the greater the likelihood of price increases across categories," said Tarun Arora, CEO & whole-time director at Zydus Wellness, adding that companies may look at navigating this through calibrated actions, such as indirect price adjustments via grammage reduction in smaller packs, while larger packs could see price revisions. Packaging can account for up to 15% of total manufacturing costs, said Arora.

Several packaged food companies across India have halted or reduced production at LPG-dependent plants due to fuel shortage, the report said. "Some manufacturers are shifting to alternative equipment such as induction systems and electric fryers, though the transition is operationally challenging," it said.

In the paints industry where nearly 40% raw materials are linked to crude derivatives, the recent rise in crude prices has started translating into higher input costs. Companies such as Berger paints, Kansai Nerolac and JSW Dulux have already increased prices last month. Meanwhile, Asian Paints is likely to effect a 6-8% price hike in the coming days.

"In Q1 FY27, margin compression is likely as raw material inflation is currently running ahead of the initial round of price hikes. We forecast additional price hikes in Q1 FY27 if crude prices remain elevated around $100/barrel," the report said.

FEELING THE PINCH

- Edible oil companies have raised prices by ₹ 4-5 per litre, Nuvama Equities said in a report
- Food companies such as Bikaji, Britannia and Nestle may increase prices this quarter. Lahori Zeera has implemented selective price hikes
- Soap makers such as HUL and Godrej are also feeling the heat of increase in palm oil prices
- Berger paints, Kansai Nerolac and JSW Dulux have increased prices last month, Asian Paints may effect a 6-8% price hike in coming days

CII seeks tax, duty rejig as part of 20-pt wish list

Times News Network

New Delhi: CII has released a 20-point plan to help shield Indian companies grappling with the impact of the West Asia crisis, including tax and duty rejig for energy inputs, customs waiver for LNG, and long-term capital gains tax exemption for primary market investment to boost foreign capital inflows.

Drawing upon the Covid-era toolkit, the industry body has demanded a credit line scheme guaranteed by govt, a three-month loan moratorium and a special refinance window for MSMEs and other sectors that have been hit hard.

"India's experience during previous crises has shown that coordinated fiscal and monetary action can significantly strengthen resilience. The next phase of policy response may therefore need to focus on targeted liquidity support, credit facilitation, trade cost management and foreign exchange stability," CII director general Chandrajit Banerjee said.

The industry chamber has also urged the finance ministry and RBI to extend delivery timelines for PSU contracts by three-four months, without invoking Liquidated Damages clauses, reduce performance guarantee and security deposit. Besides, CII wants the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platform to be expanded across affected industrial clusters to facilitate invoice discounting, along with fast-tracking pending GST refunds, duty drawback claims and RoDTEP dues.

Further, it wants govt to introduce accelerated depreciation benefits on capital goods and a special forex swap window for oil and gas PSUs to meet their requirements.

Going forward, CII proposed a standing Economic Shock Response Framework with pre-agreed triggers.

TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

Approach To Investing When Bond Yields Begin To Move Up

Rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia have pushed up crude oil prices, triggering a rise in bond yields. Higher oil prices and a weakening rupee are stoking inflation concerns, prompting investors to reassess their debt portfolios

Invesco Mutual Fund
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Why Are Bond Yields Rising?

Bond yields are climbing due to a combination of rising crude oil prices and a weakening rupee, both of which add to inflationary pressures. India's 10-year benchmark yield has risen to around 7% from 6.68% a month ago. Crude oil prices have surged to $115–$120 per barrel, and with India importing nearly 85% of its oil needs, higher prices feed directly into domestic inflation through increased transportation and production costs. At the same time, the rupee has depreciated to around 95 against the US dollar, making imports more expensive. In such an environment, investors demand higher yields to compensate for inflation and currency risks. Tightening liquidity conditions and expectations of higher interest rates further push bond prices lower and yields higher. When bond prices fall, yields rise and vice versa.

Impact Of Rising Yields On Debt MFs

The impact varies depending on the type of fund and the maturity of securities it holds. Long-duration funds, such as gilt and long-term bond funds, are the most affected. These funds invest in bonds with longer maturities, making them more sensitive to interest rate movements. Even a small rise in yields can lead to sharper price declines, resulting in noticeable short-term losses. Short-duration funds, such as liquid, ultra-short, and low-duration funds, are far less impacted. Since they invest in short-maturity instruments, price fluctuations are limited. As older securities mature, these funds are able to invest in newer bonds offering higher interest rates, which gradually improves their returns. According to Value Research data, values of long-duration funds have shrunk about 2.5% over the past three months. Gilt funds are down around 1.4%, while dynamic bond funds have seen relatively limited declines of about 0.4% over the same period.

What Should Investors Do?

Investors in long duration or gilt funds should avoid panic selling if their investment horizon is 3–5 years. Over time, accrual income and potential yield softening can help offset interim losses. For investors with a shorter time horizon, such as less than a year, liquid and ultra-short duration funds are more suitable. These funds carry lower interest rate risk and offer relatively stable returns. Investors looking to benefit from potential capital appreciation in gilt funds should wait for clearer signs of stability in crude oil prices. — PRASHANT MAHESH

Infy offering up to ₹21 lakh for specialist freshers

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Bengaluru: Infosys is sharpening its focus on deep engineering talent, highlighting a new category of "specialist freshers" through social media outreach and high-value campus hiring, as it realigns its workforce for the AI era.

A recent LinkedIn post offering salaries of up to Rs 21 lakh per annum for fresh engineering graduates has attracted wide attention, signalling a pivot from volume hiring to targeted, skill-based recruitment. As per recent hiring post, Infosys is recruiting specialist programmers across three tiers. Entry-level roles are pegged at Rs 10 lakh per annum plus bonus, mid-tier roles at Rs 16 lakh, and top-tier positions at Rs 21 lakh. Digital specialist engineers are being offered Rs 6.2 lakh along with a Rs 75,000 bonus.

A significant portion of this hiring is taking place through off-campus routes, targeting fresh graduates who have been out of college for six months to a year without placements. The strategy aligns with chief human resources officer Shaji Mathew's comments at the company's analyst day, where he emphasised building "deep engineering and domain expertise" as part of an "ambidextrous organisation" balancing AI-augmented roles with AI-first services.

Alongside lateral hiring, the company is investing in internal capability building through bridge programmes, AI-led assessments, and a new "specialist" career track. Employees who upskill can transition into expert roles focused on advanced engineering and domain capabilities.

Sebi, industry discuss mkt-related relaxations

Ficci Proposes Easing Min Public Holding Norms | RBI May Announce Steps This Wk

Sidhartha@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Market regulator Sebi has held discussions with industry on steps that may be required to help them tide over the current crisis, even as RBI prepares to announce measures later this week to deal with the impact of the West Asia conflict.

Sebi met industry bodies last week, where some steps have been proposed in view of the sharp fall in indices and the stock market volatility across the globe. Ficci members who met Sebi have sought a one-time 12-month extension for companies to meet the minimum public stock holding norm of 25% in case they are required to comply with the rule by Dec 2026.

It also said a one-time extension of 12 months for observation letters for a public or rights issue that are to expire by Dec 31 should be considered.

"Sebi may also consider permitting preferential issue and block trades, without any caps, as methods for MPS compliance, as these are more time efficient methods and will enable large issuers or promoters of larger companies to execute fund raise or share transfers with select interested investors," the industry body recommended. It also suggested that promoters be allowed to participate through the QIB route, with adequate safeguards.

Ficci also wants the creeping acquisition limit to be doubled to 10%, arguing it will help businesses to be better capitalised and enhance confidence among public shareholders. It has also proposed changes to the voluntary delisting framework.

Separately, RBI is expected to announce some measures to help buffer Indian companies from the impact of the West Asia conflict, including steps to bolster inflows and strengthen the rupee, which has slid 2.3% since the start of the war. Although there are competing currencies that have been hit harder, checking the fall is seen to be critical to combat the impact of inflation due to higher cost of imports.

Besides, it will decide on some of the measures such as a moratorium and additional funding support to MSMEs and exporters that have been sought by industry bodies.

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS WANT

- One-time extension of 12 months for observation letters for a public or rights issue
- Permitting preferential issue and block trades, without any caps
- Promoters be allowed to participate through QIB route, with adequate safeguards
- Creeping acquisition limit be doubled to 10%
- Changes to the voluntary delisting framework

Digi Yatra looks to expand wings, eyes global travel

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Bengaluru: India's Digi Yatra, a decentralised digital identity platform enabling seamless airport entry through facial recognition, is entering its next phase of growth. The focus now extends beyond domestic aviation to international travel, passport-based onboarding, and potential applications outside airport complexes.

Currently operational at 38 airports, Digi Yatra continues to expand into smaller tier-3 cities, according to CEO Suresh Khadakbhavi. "Tier-1 and tier-2 airports are largely covered. We are now moving to tier-3 airports," he said.

While domestic expansion is ongoing, the platform's next major growth driver is expected to be international travel. Digi Yatra has already conducted technical trials to test interoperability using electronic passports on routes such as Bengaluru–Doha. The aim is to enable passengers to move seamlessly across airports using a single digital identity credential. However, these pilots excluded immigration processes, which would require separate regulatory approvals and coordination with multiple stakeholders.

Khadakbhavi said the long-term vision is to align with emerging global frameworks for digital identity in travel, where credentials issued in one country can be recognised in another. "If a passenger shares their credential with a departing airport, the same could be used at the destination," he said, noting that such interoperability will depend on global standards and bilateral agreements. Alongside this, Digi Yatra is preparing to move beyond Aadhaar-based onboarding. While the platform currently relies on Aadhaar for identity verification, it has begun testing enrolment through electronic passports.

Moody's cuts GDP growth forecast for FY27 to 6%

New Delhi: Moody's Ratings has slashed India's economic growth estimates for the current fiscal to 6% from 6.8% earlier, saying the ongoing conflict in West Asia will moderate growth momentum and raise inflation risks.

In its credit opinion report on India, Moody's said prolonged disruptions, particularly LPG shipments due to the conflict, would lead to near-term household shortages, higher fuel and transport costs, and spillovers to food inflation through India's reliance on imported fertilisers.

The region accounts for around 55% of crude oil imports and over 90% of liquified petroleum gas (LPG) supplies to India. "While inflation remains contained for now, geopolitical risks have tilted the inflation outlook to the upside," Moody's said while projecting inflation to average 4.8% in FY27, up from 2.4% in FY26.

With inflation risks re-emerging and growth remaining robust, policy rates are likely to be held steady or raised gradually in fiscal, Moody's said. AGENCIES

Amid funding pressure, banks tap wider pool for credit expansion

Mayur.Shetty
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Mumbai: Bank earnings in FY26 are set to shift from margin-led gains to volume-driven growth, even as funding pressures intensify with banks increasingly tapping costly wholesale sources to sustain credit expansion. According to data released by RBI, system-level advances grew 13.8% as of March 15, outpacing deposit growth of 10.8%, widening the gap between loans and liabilities. This divergence has intensified competition for funds, pushing banks to rely more on high-cost certificates of deposit, whose issuances have surged to record levels.

A report by Systematix Research noted that the credit-deposit ratio has risen to around 83% in March from 81.7% in Dec 2025. This has forced banks to depend on wholesale funds. The report added that fresh certificate of deposit issuances jumped 46% year-on-year during the quarter, reflecting growing funding pressure.

Banks' business updates released over the weekend reinforce this trend, with most banks reporting faster credit growth than deposit accretion. The only exceptions were HDFC Bank and Yes Bank, where deposit growth exceeded loan expansion. Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Yes Bank posted double-digit balance sheet growth in FY26, while IndusInd Bank reported contraction, highlighting divergent funding strategies and balance sheet adjustments across lenders.

The strong double-digit credit growth reflects continued economic momentum, with retail, agriculture and MSME segments driving loan demand. Bank of India reported global advances rising 15.7% year-on-year to Rs 7,70,566 crore, while deposits grew 13.6% to Rs 9,27,460 crore, pushing its credit-deposit ratio to 83.1% from about 81.6% a year earlier. Kotak Mahindra Bank saw net advances increase 16.2% to Rs 4,95,892 crore and deposits rise 14.7% to Rs 5,72,457 crore, with its credit-deposit ratio inching up to 86.6% from around 85.5%.

Yes Bank stood out with stronger deposit mobilisation, as deposits grew 12.1% to Rs 3,18,970 crore, outpacing loan growth of 10.7% to Rs 2,72,454 crore.

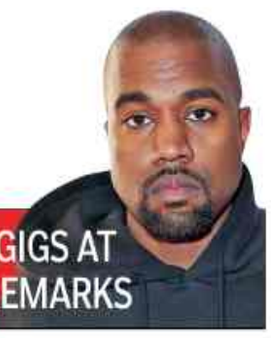
DEPOSITS BEAT ADVANCES AT HDFC, YES

Bank name	Total/Global advances (₹ Lakh Cr)	Advances YoY (%)	Total/Global deposits (₹ Lakh Cr)	Deposits YoY (%)
HDFC Bank	29.6	12	31	14.4
Bank of Baroda	14.3	16.2	16.5	12
Bank of India	7.7	15.7	9.3	13.6
Kotak Mahindra Bank	4.9	16.2	5.7	14.7
IndusInd Bank	3.1	-8.7	4	-2.6
Yes Bank	2.7	10.7	3.2	12.1
AU Small Fin Bk	1.4	25.1	1.5	22.8

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2026

I'M VERY MUCH DOWN TO EARTH, JUST NOT THIS EARTH
— KARL LAGERFELD



SHARON STONE SAYS SHE FAST-FORWARDS DURING 'BLATANT, HARSH' SEX SCENES: 'IT STEALS FROM MY OWN IMAGINATION. I PREFER MY YEARNING'

PM STARMER EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER KANYE WEST GIGS AT UK RAP & HIP-HOP FEST, CITES SINGER'S ANTI-SEMITIC REMARKS

'Tuesday power plant day': Trump threatens 'hell' on Iran

US Prez: Expect To Make Deal With Tehran On Monday

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: In a profanity-laced social media post, US President Donald Trump on Sunday threatened to rain hellfire on Iran if it did not open the Strait of Hormuz, calling its leaders "crazy b*******."

"Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!! Open the F******' Strait, you crazy b b*******, or you'll be living in Hell - JUST WATCH! Praise be to Allah," Trump posted on Easter Sunday. President Trump appeared to extend his deadline, posting a message stating simply: "Tuesday, 8:00 P.M. Eastern Time!" The new deadline, 12am GMT on Wednesday, would push back his ultimatum on Tehran by one day.

So vile and unexpected was the tone and language of the post that news outlets fact checked if the US president had indeed posted such a message, only to confirm he did so. There appeared to be an air of desperation in Trump's post despite having rescued an American airman stranded in the Iranian desert in a daring operation only a few hours before, with some American analysts surmising he was getting frustrated by not being able to overpower Iran.

In a telephone interview with Fox News after his post, Trump said he expected to make a deal with Iran tomorrow (Monday) and that his team was negotiating with some Iranian leaders who had been granted amnesty. "If they don't make a deal and fast, I'm considering blowing everything up and taking over the oil. You're going to see bridges and power plants dropping all over their country," Trump was quoted as saying.

But Iran defiantly taunted Trump in social media posts from its state media, suggesting that there are no official talks and US interlocutors may be talking with forces whom Washington expected to overthrow the ruling dispensation in Iran.

In an earlier post, Trump warned Iran that it had "48 hours before all Hell will reign (sic) down on them," signalling the possibility of expanded strikes on Iranian infrastructure that the rage-filled US president appears to favour.

US forces have already targeted a key bridge linking Tehran to Karaj, with Iranian media reporting civilian casualties. Administration officials have reportedly discussed further strikes on electric power plants and transportation networks, arguing that such targets have dual-use military value by supporting missile and drone logistics.

The emerging US strategy has sparked a vigorous debate within policy and legal circles, with critics warning that such an approach will risk crossing into collective punishment of Iran's civilian population. But supporters within the Pentagon argue that modern warfare increasingly blurs the line between civilian and military infrastructure, contending that degrading these systems is essential to limiting Tehran's ability to wage war and develop advanced weapons, including drones and missiles that have harried US and Israel. Opponents counter that such strikes risk violating international humanitarian law. They also warn that targeting infrastructure could backfire strategically, hardening Iranian public opinion and strengthening the regime's resolve. The international community also appears uneasy, with analysts expressing concern about escalation dynamics, while humanitarian organisations have warned of cascading effects on water, healthcare, and food supply systems.

AFP

11 KILLED IN LEBANON: An Israeli airstrike on Kfarhata, a village in south Lebanon, killed seven people on Sunday, including a 4-year-old child, the health ministry said in a statement. Another attack on Jnah neighbourhood in Beirut killed four and injured 39 others, the ministry added

Whole region is going to burn, warns Iran

Iran's parliament speaker warned US President Trump on Sunday that his "reckless moves" would mean "our whole region is going to burn". "Your reckless moves are dragging the US into a living HELL for every single family, and our whole region is going to burn because you insist on following Netanyahu's commands," Mohammad Ghalibaf wrote on X. Ghalibaf added that the "only real solution is respecting the rights of Iranian people and ending this dangerous game". Hours after Trump's expletive-laden post promising Iran will be "living in Hell", Tehran's mission to the UN on Sunday called the open threats to target civilian infrastructure "a direct and public incitement to terrorise civilians and clear evidence of intent to commit war crime". "The international community and all States have legal obligations to prevent such atrocious acts of war crimes," the mission said in a post on the social platform X. "They must act now. Tomorrow is too late." AGENCIES

HOW US PULLED OFF HIGH-RISK RESCUE AFTER IRAN DOWNED F-15E

US rescues airman deep inside Iran; both sides dispute scale of losses

File Photo

WHAT HAPPENED

Iran shoots down US F-15 fighter jet on Friday over southern Iran. The pilot is rescued, but the weapons officer of the jet goes missing. US begins search-and-rescue op as Iran promises a reward for anyone who turns in an 'enemy pilot'

1. BEHIND ENEMY LINES

After ejecting, the **airman, evades Iranian forces for over 48 hours hiding in the mountains.** Equipped with a **beacon and a secure communication device**, airman fights for survival, at one point **hiking up a 7,000-foot ridgeline.** Jet shot down in a region of Iran where there is significant opposition to govt, so airman may have been able to rely on locals for shelter and assistance

2. DECEPTION CAMPAIGN

Before locating airman, CIA spreads word inside Iran that US forces have found the airman and were moving him on the ground for exfiltration. The campaign confuses Iranian officials while the agency conducts its search and rescue operations

Photo: Bloomberg

C-130, HC-130J, MC-130, Black Hawk copters used in op

SURVIVAL, EVASION, RESISTANCE, ESCAPE

US aviators undergo so-called SERE training in the event they have to eject over hostile territory — Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape. They wear a combat vest which contains a radio/GPS-coded beacon to transmit their position, while they also carry water, food, first-aid material and a pistol in order to survive

3. HOW RESCUE OP UNFOLDED

- CIA traces airman's location, US aircraft drops bombs & opens fire on Iranian convoys to keep them at bay
- US Navy Seal Team 6 commandos carry on mission involving hundreds of special op troops and military personnel working deep inside Iran
- Possibly 2 C-130-class aircraft, each costing over $100m, rendered inoperable. US forces destroy aircraft on-site before exfiltrating
- Each C-130 can carrying between around 90 personnel, suggesting the deployment of 200+ special forces

WHAT US SAYS

US military 'pulled off one of the most daring Search and Rescue Operations' in its history. The officer is 'now SAFE and SOUND!' The US prez says military sent dozens of aircraft into Iran and claimed the operation was carried out without any Americans being killed or wounded

WHAT IRAN SAYS

Iran's state TV airs video showing 'parts of American aircraft' shot down by Iranian forces. The broadcaster says Iran shoots down an American transport plane and two helicopters that were part of the rescue operation. Iran's military joint command claims 4 US aircraft destroyed

A handout photo from IRGC official website Sepah News on Sunday shows the wreckage and remains of targeted and crashed aircraft in central Iran

US doctrine of 'leave no one behind' prioritises recovery of its service members above all else

▶Continued from P1

The WSO, injured and isolated, is said to have activated an emergency beacon from a concealed position, enabling US forces to begin triangulating his location, even as the CIA is said to have launched a deception campaign to mislead the hunters.

What followed was a massive, multi-platform rescue effort involving special operations forces, HC-130J and MC-130 variants, and Black Hawk helicopters, supported by close air cover. US forces reportedly fought their way into and out of the extraction zone amid heavy resistance, with at least one fierce firefight reported on the ground. While the US has officially emphasised the absence of American casualties or prisoners, multiple reports indicate that the mission incurred substantial material losses.

Trump underscored that the rescued officer was "SAFE and SOUND," adding that the mission proved "overwhelming Air Dominance and Superiority over the Iranian skies."

At least one — and possibly two — C-130-class aircraft, each costing more than $100 million depending on the bells and whistles, were rendered inoperable after landing on improvised desert strips, reportedly becoming stuck in sand or otherwise immobilised. Rather than risk sensitive technology falling into Iranian hands, US forces are believed to have destroyed the aircraft on-site before exfiltrating. Each C-130 is capable of carrying between around 90 personnel, suggesting the deployment of more than 200 special forces in the mission.

Additional reports suggest that two helicopters sustained damage, and that an A-10 Warthog providing suppressive cover crashed elsewhere in the region. Independent satellite imagery and ground-level analysis appear to confirm the presence of destroyed aircraft hulks at a makeshift landing site, lending credence to claims that US forces deliberately demolished their own equipment during the operation.

For military planners, this trade-off — equipment for personnel — is not unusual. The long-standing US doctrine of "leave no one behind" — something President Trump underlined in his post — prioritises the recovery of service members above all else, even at significant cost. Iranian officials, however, have presented a starkly different version of events. According to statements and reports carried by state media outlets such as IRNA, Iranian air defenses and special units engaged and shot down multiple US aircraft, including at least one C-130 and two Black Hawk helicopters.

Iranian authorities have gone further, declaring the rescue operation a failure and circulating images of burning wreckage as proof of what they describe as a humiliating US defeat. Senior Iranian figures also seized on the incident for political messaging.

The truth likely lies somewhere in between. While visual evidence confirms the destruction of US aircraft, American personnel including special forces appear to have emerged largely unscathed, much less captured — an outcome that denies Iran a major propaganda or bargaining victory. But if the rescue mission has bolstered Trump politically, it has intensified fears of a broader and more destructive phase of the conflict, with aircraft losses in the mission alone adding up to $300 million, enraging Washington even more.

The emerging US strategy has sparked a debate, with critics warning that this will risk crossing into collective punishment of Iran's civilian population. But supporters within the Pentagon argue that modern warfare increasingly blurs the line between civilian and military infrastructure, contending that degrading these systems is essential to limiting Tehran's ability to develop advanced weapons. Opponents counter that such strikes risk violating international humanitarian law. They also warn that targeting infrastructure could backfire, hardening Iranian public opinion and strengthening the regime's resolve.

Secret Service investigates reports of gunfire near Lafayette Park across from White House

The US Secret Service said on Sunday it was investigating reports of overnight gunfire near Lafayette Park, which is across the street from the White House. No injuries were reported, and no suspect was found after a search of the park and the surrounding area after midnight, the agency said in an online post. President Trump was spending the weekend at the White House, which had no immediate comment on the incident. White House operations remained as normal, but security in the area was increased, according to the Secret Service. The park has been fenced off for weeks of renovations. AP

Fresh hits on Gulf civilian infra

Dubai: Critical infrastructure across the Gulf came under attack from Iran on Sunday, with damage reported at civilian facilities in the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait. Gulf countries have faced repeated drone and missile salvos from Iran in response to US and Israeli strikes on the Islamic republic that began at the end of Feb.

Kuwait's oil facilities, power and desalination plants hit

Attacks by Iranian drones on Sunday resulted in "severe" damage to Kuwaiti oil and petrochemical facilities, the state petroleum company said. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said a number of facilities of its subsidiary Petrochemical Industries Company were targeted in the attack which "resulted in the outbreak of fires at several of these facilities and caused severe material damage". Earlier, Kuwait's electricity and water ministry said two power and water desalination plants were damaged by a drone attack from Iran, causing "significant material damage and the shutdown of two electricity generating units". In Kuwait City, the finance ministry said an Iranian drone attack caused "extensive" damage to a govt building, but "no human casualties were recorded".

Reuters

A wrecked car near a damaged building in Sitra, Bahrain, on Saturday

Bahrain petrochemical company set ablaze

Bahrain's Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company said a fire at its operating units after an Iranian drone attack was brought under control, the Bahraini state news agency reported on Sunday. No injuries were reported, with teams currently conducting an assessment of damage from the incident, the news agency said. GPIC is a joint venture producing petrochemicals and fertiliser, and it is owned by Bahrain's govt, SABIC Agri-Nutrients Co, and Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Co.

Abu Dhabi petrochemicals plant halts after fire

A huge petrochemicals plant at Ruwais in the UAE was halted after an attack sparked multiple fires, Abu Dhabi's govt media office said Sunday. The fires were caused by falling debris from air-defence interception, the office said in a post on X. No injuries were reported. The sprawling Ruwais industrial zone in the Al Dhafra region suffered an assault last month that shut down Abu Dhabi's only oil refinery. The petrochemicals plant at the complex produces polyethylene and polypropylene and is operated by Borouge Plc.

The UAE's official news agency also reported authorities were dealing with an incident after Khor Fakkan port in the Gulf of Oman was targeted. British maritime security agency UKMTO said "splashes from unknown projectiles" had been reported close to one container ship while it was loading in the key port near the strait. AGENCIES

WAR WOES

Nepal announces two-day weekends

Nepal said on Sunday it was cutting the working week from six days to five for the civil service and educational institutions to cope with the energy crisis. Saturday had until now been the only day off each week for such workers in the Himalayan nation. Govt spokesperson Sasmit Pokharel said the 2-day weekend would come into effect this week. He also said the govt was also exploring legal measures to convert petrol and diesel vehicles to electric power but gave no further details. AFP

Italy sets jet fuel limits

Several airports in Italy issued advisories of limited fuel supplies for the next few days. Fuel restrictions for flights have been introduced at the airports of Bologna, Milan Linate, Treviso and Venice, according to a Notice to Airmen, or Notam advisories. The restrictions in Italy are among the earliest instances that fuel shortage in Europe are starting to impact operations since the conflict broke out in West Asia. BLOOMBERG

Israel claims Iran still has over 1k missiles capable of threatening it

Israel assesses that Iran still has more than 1,000 missiles capable of reaching it, while Hezbollah's arsenal in Lebanon includes as many as 10,000 shorter-range rockets, according to military briefings cited by Israeli media this weekend.

In an interview with Channel 12, an Israeli air force officer provided the tally of remaining Iranian ballistic missiles in what appeared to be an official break from earlier refusals to disclose estimates of Tehran's arsenal. The estimate of 8,000 to 10,000 rockets in Hezbollah hands was reported by Israel's Army Radio. "A great deal of resources would have to be invested to bring that down to zero. In all honesty, I have to tell you that it won't reach zero," the air force officer, an intelligence lieutenant-colonel whose name was withheld under customary regulations, said of Iran's ability to keep firing.

Iran was believed to have about 2,000 intermediate-range ballistic missiles capable of reaching Israel, two Israeli officials said earlier on condition of anonymity. Tehran is firing missiles from dozens of tunnel silos in remote regions that are proving hard to destroy preemptively, the air force officer told Channel 12. BLOOMBERG

Trump's actions risk confidence in US role as guardian of shipping

Of all the things President Trump has done to disrupt global commerce, from levying punitive tariffs to tearing up trade deals, few would be as consequential as withdrawing and leaving the rest of the world to secure the Persian Gulf.

The move, which the US president has repeatedly threatened as his war with Iran drags on, would represent a break with decades of US policy keeping open the sea lanes that carry four-fifths of the $35 trillion global goods trade. Even the threat of reducing security for the Strait of Hormuz risks shaking confidence in a pillar of the world economy, as well as American wealth and power.

Since World War II, the US has used its navy to deter attacks, counter piracy and challenge attempts by states to restrict lawful passage across the oceans. Those guarantees have allowed oil, goods and commodities to pass across borders with minimal friction. "The free flow of commerce through the strait is a larger principle at stake in this conflict," said retired Vice Admiral John W Miller, former commander of US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. "Failure to ensure freedom of navigation in Hormuz puts global freedom of navigation everywhere at risk."

Reuters

FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION

European and Asian officials said the conflict has eroded faith in the US role as protector of the high seas, raising concerns about energy prices, shifting security calculations and growing doubts about Washington's ability to manage the consequences of the war. The US campaign to blow up speed boats suspected of ferrying drugs across the Caribbean and doubts about whether the navy made sufficient efforts to save crew of an Iranian warship it sank off the coast of Sri Lanka have raised questions about the US's commitment to the rules that protect all sailors. BLOOMBERG

OPEC+ agrees on symbolic oil quota hike amid war, claim delegates

Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) members agreed to raise their oil production quotas for May, a symbolic move as the Iran war constrains output and shipments from several of the alliance's largest members.

Key producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia agreed to increase targets by about 206,000 barrels a day during a video conference on Sunday, according to delegates who asked not to be identified discussing private deliberations. With oil flows from the Persian Gulf throttled by the ongoing Iran war, such a move by the group is theoretical.

Oil prices have been roiled by five weeks of conflict, climbing to almost $120 a barrel last month, and soaring costs for products such as jet fuel and diesel are threatening inflation. Brent futures settled near $109 on Friday after Trump vowed an escalation in the war. Before the conflict erupted, eight major Gulf countries had been gradually restoring supply halted back in 2023. They held production steady for the first three months of this year, then on March 1 they agreed to an increase of 206,000 barrels a day for April. BLOOMBERG

Top Russian hypersonic missile designer Leonov dead

Moscow: A top Russian missile designer, Alexander Leonov, linked to the development of hypersonic missile Zircon and new generation Indo-Russian Brahmos NG, died at the age of 74 on Sunday, local media reported.

Leonov was CEO and chief designer of NPO Mashinostroyenia (NPOMASH), the Russian JV partner in New Delhi-based BrahMos Aerospace. His press service did not disclose the cause of his death or where he died immediately, according to the RBC news portal. Leonov was credited for designing Russia's Zircon (Tsirkon) - a ship-based hypersonic cruise missile designed to destroy surface and land targets and is part of the 3K22 missile system, which entered service in Jan 2023.

The missile is launched from surface naval platforms and submarines and can be adopted for coastal defence.

Quoting open sources, RBC reported that Zircon is capable of reaching speeds of up to Mach 9 (9 times faster than sound) and has a range of 400 to 1,500 km, and can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads. PTI

B'desh suspects measles killed at least 98 children in past 3 weeks

Dhaka: Bangladesh said it suspected measles killed at least 98 children in the past three weeks, official data showed Sunday, with Dhaka ramping up vaccination efforts in the worst-affected areas. Last week, PM Tarique Rahman directed two senior ministers to travel across the nation of 170 million people in an effort to assess the scale of the crisis to help coordinate a response.

Health ministry data released on Sunday showed that children aged between six months and five years old with suspected measles symptoms soared to 6,476. "Compared with past years, the number of affected children is higher, and the death toll is higher too," Halimur Rashid, director at the Communicable Disease Control, told AFP referring to the number in suspected cases.

Bangladesh has made progress in vaccinations to tackle measles, but a drive due in June 2024 was delayed by an uprising most Bangladeshi kids receive a vaccine at nine months, although many infected in this outbreak had been six months old, officials added. AFP

WORLD DIGEST

Artemis astronauts glimpse Moon's 'Grand Canyon' ahead of lunar flyby

The Artemis astronauts have taken in sights of the Moon never before seen by human eyes, crew members reported on Sunday as their spacecraft crossed the two-thirds mark on their journey to a long-anticipated lunar flyby. As the astronauts went to bed in the early hours of Sunday, closing out the fourth day of their 10-day mission, they were nearly 321,869kms from Earth and 82,000 miles from the Moon, according to Nasa's online dashboard. "This mission marks the first time the entire basin has been seen with human eyes," Nasa said. The massive crater, which resembles a bullseye, had been photographed before by orbiting cameras. Speaking to Canadian children live from space, astronaut Christina Koch said the crew was most excited to see the basin — sometimes known as the Moon's "Grand Canyon."

German men must inform military of foreign stays

A new German military service law will require most young men to inform authorities when leaving the country for long periods, with a newspaper report on the little-noticed provision prompting widespread debate. The defence ministry confirmed to AFP on Saturday that men from the age of 17 "are required to obtain prior approval" from the German armed forces for foreign stays lasting longer than three months. Approval will be granted as long as "no specific service as a soldier is expected during the period in question," a ministry spokesman told AFP.

Court extends detention of Nepal former PM

Nepal's former PM K P Sharma Oli and former home minister Ramesh Lekhak will remain in judicial custody for five more days as a district court in Kathmandu approved to extend their detention after the police sought more time to probe their alleged involvement in the Gen Z movement crackdown in Sept last year.

TODAY'S FACE-OFF
KKR vs PBKS
TV TIME 7:30 PM
STAR SPORTS / JIOHOTSTAR

PLAYED 35
Won by KKR 21 (69%)
Won by PBKS 13 (31%)
NR:1

LAST FIVE MATCHES
KKR L L L L W
PBKS W W L W L
VENUE: KOLKATA
ODDS
KKR 5/4 | PBKS 8/10

IPL 2026

"TUSHAR EXECUTED HIS YORKERS PERFECTLY UNDER PRESSURE. HE DID NOT GIVE ANY CHANCES TO A PLAYER LIKE RASHID TO FIND THE BOUNDARY. IT WAS A WONDERFUL DISPLAY OF GAME SENSE. THIS WILL ENSURE THAT THE SELECTORS DON'T TAKE THEIR EYES OFF HIM."
—Dale Steyn | Ex-SA pace great

David storm buries CSK

RCB Exploit Chennai's Bowling Frailties To Notch Up 43-Run Win

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Bengaluru: Chennai Super Kings' bowling had looked undercooked in their opening two matches of the season. On Sunday at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Royal Challengers Bengaluru batters, Tim David in particular, exposed those frailties brutally, piling up their third highest total in the Indian Premier League.

Riding on David's (70) late assault and his unbroken 99-run stand off just 37 deliveries with skipper Rajat Patidar, the defending champions surged to a daunting 250/3.

In reply, CSK, who lost three wickets in the first three overs, didn't recover well enough from the early blows and were bowled out for 207 in 19.4 overs, handing RCB a 43-run victory.

MATCH REPORT

On a grey day for the yellow brigade, skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad led the top-order collapse, edging Jacob Duffy (2/58) in the opening over — a sharp chance that Devdutt Padikkal pouched safely in the slips. Ayush Mhatre followed soon after, becoming Bhuvneshwar Kumar's (3/41) 200th IPL wicket, offering a simple catch to Patidar at mid-off.

At the other end, Sanju Samson watched the slide unfold but failed to arrest it. His underwhelming start in CSK colours continued as he poked at a Duffy delivery that angled away, only to nick it to Padikkal at first slip. Sarfaraz Khan struck a 50, but his stumping by Jitesh Sharma off Krunal Pandya (2/36) further dented CSK's fading chances.

Prashant Veer (43) and Jamie Overton (37) offered a glimmer of hope with their 57-run seventh wicket stand, but once Bhuvneshwar sent back the former, it was only a matter of time before RCB completed the formalities. Earlier, David, who had managed just 139 runs in his previous eight T20 innings coming into the game, flipped the narrative in stunning fashion. The Australian produced a breathtaking unbeaten 25-ball 70 (3x4, 8x6), unleashing a barrage of sixes.

But it was Patidar, who set the tone for the massive total. Off his second ball, he launched Noor Ahmad into the stands to bring up RCB's 100 and underline the aggressive intent. The captain struck a blistering unbeaten 48 off just 19 deliveries (1x4, 6x6), playing the perfect foil to David's carnage, who too launched his attack off Ahmad, with three consecutive maximums.

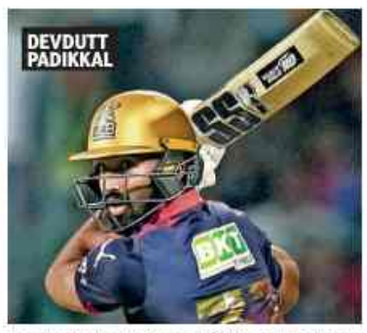
David made the most of a reprieve when he was on 28. Bowled off a no-ball by Anshul Kamboj, he capitalised fully, racing to a 21-ball half-century dominated by clean, towering hits. CSK's most effective bowler until then, Jamie Overton, was taken apart in the 19th over, conceding 30 runs as David smashed four sixes and a boundary. A staggering 97 runs came in the final five overs as the hosts turned a strong total into a monstrous one.

Before the duo, in-form Padikkal (50) had laid the platform with his second consecutive half-century of the season, while openers Phil Salt (46) and Virat Kohli (28) had provided the early impetus but failed to convert promising starts. Kohli, who survived on 7 after being dropped by Shivam Dube, was eventually dismissed by Kamboj, while Salt fell to Dube. For a brief period, CSK sensed an opening. But that window shut quickly by Patidar and David's aggression.

On a batting-friendly surface, the margin for error was minimal — and CSK paid the price.

Pics: Syed Asif

70 Tim David's unbeaten knock is his highest score in the IPL — his second fifty — the first being 50 not out vs Punjab Kings at Bengaluru on April 18, 2025.



SCOREBOARD

RCB: Phil Salt c Noor Ahmad b Dube 46, Virat Kohli c Dube b Kamboj 28, Devdutt Padikkal b Overton 50, Rajat Patidar not out 48, Tim David not out 70. **Extras** (b 1, lb 3, nb 1, w 3) 8. **Total** (for three wickets, 20 overs) 250. **Fall of wickets:** 1-37, 2-93, 3-151. **Bowling:** Khaleel Ahmed 4-0-37-0, Matt Henry 3-0-36-0, Anshul Kamboj 4-0-52-1, Noor Ahmad 4-0-49-0, Jamie Overton 3-0-42-1, Shivam Dube 2-0-30-1.

CSK: Sanju Samson c Devdutt Padikkal b Jacob Duffy 9, Ruturaj Gaikwad c Devdutt Padikkal b Jacob Duffy 7, Ayush Mhatre c Rajat Patidar b Bhuvneshwar Kumar 1, Sarfaraz Khan st Jitesh Sharma b Krunal Pandya 50, Kartik Sharma c Abhinandan Singh b Krunal Pandya 6, Shivam Dube c Jitesh Sharma b Abhinandan Singh 18, Prashant Veer c Rajat Patidar b Bhuvneshwar Kumar 43, Jamie Overton c (sub)Jacob Bethell b Suyash Sharma 37, Anshul Kamboj not out 19, Noor Ahmad c Virat Kohli b Bhuvneshwar Kumar 8, Matt Henry c Phil Salt b Abhinandan Singh 2. **Extras:** (lb-2, w-3, nb-2) 7 **Total:** (all out, 19.4 overs) 207 **Fall of wickets:** 1-9, 2-10, 3-30, 4-77, 5-84, 6-108, 7-165, 8-178, 9-190. **Bowling:** Jacob Duffy 4-0-58-2, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-41-3, Abhinandan Singh 3.4-0-30-2, Krunal Pandya 3-0-36-2, Suyash Sharma 4-0-21-1, Romario Shepherd 1-0-19-0.

3 RCB became the second team to record three or more totals of 250+ in the IPL. SRH holds a record for posting five such scores — one each vs MI, RCB, DC, RR & KKR. All three of RCB's 250-plus totals have come at Chinnaswamy.

50 Devdutt Padikkal has recorded his second fifty vs CSK — the first being 70 at Sharjah on Sept 24, 2021. Padikkal's 10th fifty for RCB is his 13th in the IPL.

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

Shami & Pant help LSG get off the mark

Cricimas

IN RHYTHM: LSG pacer Mohammed Shami turned back the clock against SRH and dismissed Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma

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Hyderabad: Sunrisers Hyderabad's explosive top order imploded against a disciplined Lucknow Super Giants attack as the hosts began their home leg on a disappointing note, suffering a five-wicket loss at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium on Sunday.

SRH's top three — Abhishek Sharma (0), Travis Head (7) and Ishan Kishan (1) — were back in the dugout inside four overs as the hosts crawled to 22/3 in the powerplay and 35/4 at the halfway mark. Heinrich Klaasen (62 off 41 balls; 5x4, 2x6) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (56 off 33; 3x4, 5x6) then staged a spirited rescue act with a 63-ball 116-run fifth-wicket stand, lifting SRH to 156/9. The total, however, proved inadequate as Lucknow rode on skipper Rishabh Pant's unbeaten 63 (50b, 9x4) to seal victory with a ball to spare.

Lucknow Super Giants reverted to their trusted opening pair of Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram, who added 37 for the first wicket before Eshan Malinga dismissed Marsh. Markram (45 off 27; 6x4, 2x6) kept the scoring brisk, taking 15 runs off Jaydev Unadkat in the sixth over to push LSG to 53/1 in the powerplay.

Shivang Kumar broke the 40-run second-wicket stand by removing Markram, and SRH briefly clawed back as Harsh Dubey dismissed Ayush Badoni (12) and Nicholas Pooran (1) was run out, raising hopes.

Pant, however, steadied the chase with Abdul Samad (16), adding 34 crucial runs. Dubey over, leaving LSG needing 18 off 14 balls. With nine required in the final over, Pant struck consecutive boundaries off Unadkat and finished the game with another four.

Earlier, put into bat, SRH endured a disastrous start as Mohammed Shami (2/9) removed Abhishek and Head to reduce them to 8/2, while Prince Yadav bowled Kishan to make it 11/3. Liam Livingstone (14) fell attempting a sweep as SRH limped to 35/4 in 10 overs.

Klaasen and Nitish then counterattacked, plundering 79 runs between overs 11 and 15, with Nitish smashing Digvesh Rathi for three sixes in a 22-run over. After both departed in quick succession, SRH lost their last five wickets for just 14 runs.

Brief Scores: SRH: 156 for 9 in 20 overs (Heinrich Klaasen 62, Nitish Kumar Reddy 56; Mohammed Shami 2/9, Avesh Khan 2/36, Manimaran Siddharth 1/29) lost to **LSG: 160 for 5 in 19.5 overs.** (R Pant 68 not out, A Markram 45; Harsh Dubey 2/18).

HOW THEY STAND

TEAM	M	W	L	NRR	PTS
RR	2	2	0	2.233	4
DC	2	2	0	1.170	4
PBKS	2	2	0	0.637	4
RCB	1	1	0	0.807	2
SRH	3	1	2	0.275	2
MI	2	1	1	-0.206	2
LSG	2	1	1	-0.542	2
GT	2	0	2	-0.424	0
KKR	2	0	2	-1.964	0
CSK	2	0	2	-2.562	0

18 Number of dot balls bowled by Mohammed Shami vs SRH — the record is 20 by Deepak Chahar during his figures of 4-0-20-3 for CSK vs KKR at Chennai on April 19, 2009. Seven bowlers have delivered 19 dot balls each — Zaheer Khan, Shami, Ashish Nehra, Harshal Patel, Munaf Patel, Sreesanth and Umran Malik.

68 An unbeaten match-winning knock played by Rishabh Pant is his first fifty as captain in a successful chase in the IPL — his fifth overall in successful chases.

Depleted KKR keen to stop in-form PBKS

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Kolkata: If momentum is crucial in sport, Punjab Kings will carry plenty of it into their clash against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on Monday. Last season's runners-up, who have opened their campaign with back-to-back wins, start as favourites against hosts KKR, still searching for their first point of IPL 2026.

KKR's bowling was initially seen as their weak link after they failed to defend a 200-plus total in the opening game, but their batters' inability to last 20 overs or reach 200 in the second match has now raised concerns about the batting too. Skipper Ajinkya Rahane summed up the situation candidly: "At this moment, we are still looking for the best combination."

A team still unsure of its balance will find it difficult to take on a confident opponent. Injuries have compounded KKR's problems, with Harshit Rana and Akash Deep ruled out, while IPL 2026's highest-paid player Cameron Green has yet to bowl despite the management being aware of his limitations beforehand.

"We need that extra bowler as a cushion. If we play three pacers and two spinners and someone struggles, we don't have a backup at this moment," Rahane admitted.

Green rolling his arm over in the nets on Saturday was a positive sign, but the Australian is unlikely to bowl on Monday. His struggles with the bat — just 20 runs in two matches — have further hurt KKR in the middle overs, with Rinku Singh and Ramandeep Singh also yet to provide the finishing punch usually associated with Andre Russell.

KKR's batters will face a stern test against one of the most experienced bowling units in the tournament. Arshdeep Singh, Xavier Bartlett, Marco Jansen and Yuzvendra Chahal bring considerable international experience and adaptability to varying conditions.

WEATHER
27°C

NUMBERS GAME

36 Number of wickets at 20.27 runs apiece in 27 matches taken by Sunil Narine — the most by a bowler against Punjab Kings in the IPL.

21 Number of wins registered by KKR against Punjab Kings — the most by them against any opponent. Punjab Kings' tally of defeats (21) is the most by them against any opponent.

Stats: Rajesh Kumar

Riyan's trust in Tushar's death overs skill pays off

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Ahmedabad: It is one thing to be trusted by the captain and another to repay that faith under pressure. On Saturday night at India's grandest cricket theatre, Mumbai pacer Tushar Deshpande answered his captain's clarion call, holding his nerve with a near-perfect final over to guide Rajasthan Royals to a six-run win over Gujarat Titans.

Titans were restricted to 204/8 after Royals, having opted to bat first, posted 210/6.

When Sandeep Sharma leaked 15 runs in the 18th over, the equation was reduced to 15 off 12 balls, a situation that usually favours the chasing side. But Royals' pace duo of Jofra Archer and Deshpande producied a clinical exhibition of death bowling to deny the Titans' big hitters.

Captain Riyan Parag's bold tactical call proved decisive. He handed the crucial penultimate over to Archer, who responded like a seasoned campaigner. After being hit for a six, the English pacer pinned Kagiso Rabada with sharp short balls into the body and mixed them with fuller deliveries, conceding just four runs.

TUSHAR DESHPANDE

With 11 to defend, Deshpande, stuck to fuller lengths and yorkers and denied Rashid Khan and Rabada any room.

South African great Dale Steyn praised Deshpande's composure and execution. "The final over bowled by Deshpande was exceptional. It is very difficult for a bowler to stay calm in such a high-pressure situation because a lot of things go through your mind. To execute your plans perfectly without feeling the pressure is a rare skill. Tushar bowled four inch-perfect yorkers, then changed his line and baited Rashid Khan into going for the big shot, which resulted in a catch."

After lean season, Titans' Rashid looks for course correction

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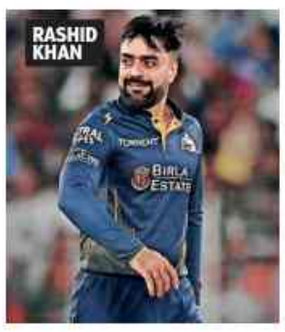
Mumbai: Rashid Khan remains confident that Gujarat Titans will bounce back despite losing their first two matches of IPL-2026, even as the Afghanistan T20I captain admitted he is unsure about playing the one-off Test against India in June due to concerns over his back.

Rashid, who led Gujarat Titans in their previous game against Rajasthan Royals in Ahmedabad with regular skipper Shubman Gill sidelined due to back spasms, said the team is not far from turning things around.

"Gill didn't want to take a risk. We still have a long tournament ahead. We've lost a couple of very close games — one while defending 163 and the other chasing 211. We were in the game both times, but didn't finish well. There are still 12 matches left, and we'll take the learnings and come back stronger," Rashid told TOI.

The 27-year-old leg-spinner, who underwent back surgery in November 2023, said he will take a call on the Test against India in New Chandigarh (June 6–10) based on how his body responds.



"To be honest, after the surgery, I wasn't allowed to play Test cricket for two to three years. The doctor told me that if I want a longer career, that's the one format I should avoid because of the workload," Rashid said.

"In my last Test, I bowled 55 overs. For someone coming back from back surgery, that's a big risk. So we'll think about the Test match. But I'm definitely looking forward to the ODIs against India — it will be an exciting series for us," he added.

Rashid last played a Test in January 2025 against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo, where he returned figures of 4/94 and 7/66 in a 72-run win.

Once among the most feared bowlers in the IPL, especially during his time with Sunrisers Hyderabad, Rashid has seen a dip in returns in recent seasons. In IPL-2025, he managed nine wickets in 15 matches at an average of 57.11 and an economy rate of 9.34, and has picked up two wickets in two games so far this season.

However, Rashid insists his dip in form has little to do with his injury.

"To be honest, it's not about the injury. Last year, I just missed my length and line, which didn't allow me to be at the level I've maintained over the last six or seven years," he said. "In the last two games, I feel I've hit 90-95% of the areas I wanted to, and that's a good sign."

Rashid also pointed to changing conditions in the IPL, with flatter pitches and rising totals making life tougher for bowlers.

"Two or three years ago, no one thought teams would score 300. Now people are talking about it. If teams are scoring 230-240 regularly, you can't expect to bowl four overs for 10 runs and two wickets," he said. "Earlier, 180-190 was a good total. Now, even defending 220 is difficult. The pitches are flatter, and the support for spinners isn't the same, but for me it's about improving myself."

GT batting coach Hayden wants more cohesion in run chases

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Ahmedabad: The Gujarat Titans lacked cohesiveness in batting during their six-run loss to Rajasthan Royals, while their bowlers were a little bit off rhythm, their batting coach Matthew Hayden felt.

The hosts were in a strong position at 103/1 after 10 overs in their chase of 211 against the Royals before it fell apart at the Narendra Modi Stadium here. Reflecting on the defeat, Hayden said, "A lot of our bowlers were just a little bit off their rhythm. Rabada's figures were a bit more expensive than perhaps what he bowled today. I thought he was actually good, and the same with Rashid. Siraj had an off day. I want the bowlers to keep consistently bowling their best ball."

He said the wickets of Washington Sundar and M Shahrukh Khan made the difference. "We're talking about six runs. So those little things in T20 cricket, when you're chasing down a big total, they become vital in the decision-making process of a batting unit. We just need that little bit of cohesion in our entire batting lineup," Hayden added.

Opposite ends, same legacy

Kumble & Dravid Unveil The Bowling Ends Named In Their Honour At Their Home Ground

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Bengaluru: For over two decades, Anil Kumble and Rahul Dravid stood shoulder-to-shoulder — for India, Karnataka and Royal Challengers Bengaluru — forming the spine of teams built on discipline

HOME HEROES

and excellence. Rarely were they on opposite sides. At the M Chinnaswamy Stadium now, that has changed — symbolically.

The former India captains have bowling ends named after them at their home ground, a decision taken by the Karnataka State Cricket Association in Feb this year to honour two of its most illustrious sons. On Sunday, ahead of the southern derby between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Chennai Super Kings, Kumble and Dravid, accompanied by their families, formally unveiled the ends.

Pics: Syed Asif

MAKING MEMORIES: (From left) Svasti, Aaruni, Mayas, Chetana, Anil Kumble, Santosh Menon, Venkatesh Prasad, Rahul Dravid, Pushpa and Vijay during the unveiling of the bowling ends at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Sunday

In a brief but emotionally charged pre-match ceremony, the greats were given a rousing reception by a packed stadium. The Chinnaswamy, a venue that shaped their journeys from promising cricketers to legends, echoed with applause as the two walked out together — one more time.

Their former India teammate and current KSCA president Venkatesh Prasad, along with secretary Santosh Menon, presented citations to them.

Kumble began his address in English before switching to Kannada, but his words were largely drowned out by the deafening cheers from the stands. Both Kumble and Dravid thanked the KSCA for the honour and acknowledged the role of the BCCI, their families and fans in their journeys.

The occasion was made more special with their families by their side. Kumble was joined by his wife Chetana and children Aaruni, Mayas and Svasti, while Dravid was accompanied by his mother Pushpa and brother Vijay.

After the ceremony, Kumble quickly returned to his broadcaster duties, while Dravid spent some time greeting players from both the teams.

At the Chinnaswamy Stadium, where they built their legacy together, Kumble and Dravid now stand bound together forever in history.

Dominant Meenakshi, Jaismine power India

New Delhi: India's boxing contingent continued its strong run at the Asian Championships in Ulaanbaatar, with both women and men pugilists delivering impressive performances to secure multiple semifinal spots on Sunday. The highlight of Day 7 came from the women's

BOXING

team, where Meenakshi and Jaismine registered dominant victories over their respective rivals. Their wins ensured that every Indian woman boxer has now reached a medal-winning position ahead of the last-four stage.

In the 48kg category, Meenakshi displayed excellent control and composure to defeat Japan's Yuka Sadamatsu by a unanimous 5-0 decision. Jaismine followed up with an equally strong show in the 57kg division, comfortably beating China's Ziyi Chen with another 5-0 verdict.

The men's team also ensured a productive day, adding more semifinalists to India's tally. Lokesh (85kg) secured a convincing 5-0 win over South Korea's Gichae Kim. Akash continued the momentum with an impressive 5-0 victory against Turkmenistan's Yhlas Bagtyyarov. Harsh Choudhary defeated Kyrgyz Republic's Tynystan Alybaev by an identical margin to book his semis berth. TNN

SNAP SHOTS

Kochhar finishes fifth

India's Karandeep Kochhar hit a late hat-trick of birdies in the thrilling fourth round to finish fifth at the International Series Japan, in Chiba, Japan Sunday. Kochhar remained bogey-free on the final day after a tumultuous third round and hit birdies on the 4th, 16th, 17th and 18th holes to finish the tournament with 12-under 272.

Aditi in top 20: India's Aditi Ashok endured a disappointing four-over 76 in the third round to slip to T-20 with one round left to play at the Aramco Championship in Las Vegas. Aditi (74-71-76) now has a total score of five-over par for the week. The other Indians in the field Pranavi Urs (78) and Avani Prashanth (81) were struggling. Pranavi is now 13-over par, while Bengaluru's Avani is 16-over par. With one day left in the week, the two are placed T-69 and 73rd respectively.

India lose to Oz: India suffered a 0-5 defeat at the hands of Australia in the AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup 2026 at the Pathum Thani Stadium in Thailand on Sunday. With this result, India currently sit at the bottom of Group C with zero points from their two games. A win in their last group-stage match against Chinese Taipei on Wednesday can still secure passage to the knockout stage for Joakim Alexandersson's side.

Abhay advances, Anahat bows out: India's Abhay Singh rallied to beat Egyptian Aly Abou Eleinen 3-2 (9-11, 11-8, 3-11, 11-4, 11-8) in the men's singles opening round of the El Gouna Open, a PSA Platinum event, in El Gouna, Egypt. He will next meet Youssef Ibrahim. Meanwhile, Anahat Singh lost to world No 1 Hania El Hammamy. The Egyptian won 11-8, 11-5, 9-11, 11-8.

Messi scores but Miami held: Lionel Messi marked the opening of Inter Miami's gleaming new stadium with a goal as the Major League Soccer champions battled to a 2-2 draw against Austin FC on Saturday. Inter Miami's co-owner David Beckham was among the star-studded crowd as the club's 26,000-capacity Nu Stadium made its debut, marking the end of a more-than-decade-long journey to find a permanent home.

Nuggets snap Spurs' win streak: Nikola Jokic finished with 40 points as hosts Denver Nuggets ended San Antonio's 11-game winning streak with a 136-134 win over the Spurs on Saturday. **Results:** Denver 136 bt San Antonio 134 (OT); Miami 152 bt Washington 136; Detroit 116 bt Philadelphia 93.

Certainty clinches feature: Certainty, piloted by Kuldeep Singh and trained by Laxman Singh won the Kamareddy Plate, the main event on the concluding day of the winter season in Hyderabad on Sunday.

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Barca's major title charge

Lewandowski Late Goal Puts Team Seven Points Clear After Real's Loss To Mallorca

Madrid: Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski came off the bench to score a late winner in a 2-1 victory away to 10-man Atletico Madrid on Saturday that moved the defending champions seven points clear of Real Madrid at the top of the LaLiga table.

LA LIGA

Barcelona had plenty of motivation after Real's 2-1 loss at Mallorca earlier on Saturday, but it was the hosts who took the lead six minutes before the break through Giuliano Simeone.

The visitors responded with a Marcus Rashford goal three minutes later and Atletico had Nico Gonzalez sent off on the stroke of halftime. Lewandowski was in the right place to net a fortunate rebound three minutes from time.

"We all know what happened this afternoon," Barcelona defender Eric Garcia told broadcaster DAZN of Real Madrid's defeat. "We knew that if we won today, we'd take a very important step forward."

Atletico remain fourth in the standings on 57 points, 19 points off Barcelona and the sides will meet again at the Camp Nou on Wednesday in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal clash.

The first half brought plenty of chances at both ends, with Atletico's all-time leading scorer Antoine Griezmann at the heart of the home side's attacking threat. Griezmann created the first opportunity himself, weaving through the Barcelona defence, but sent his effort straight at keeper Joan Garcia and later fired wide after Alex Baena sent a low ball across the area. AGENCIES

AP

Marcus Rashford scores Barcelona's first goal against Atletico Madrid

LA LIGA: TOP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barca	30	25	1	4	80	29	76
Real	30	22	3	5	64	28	69

Vaishali snatches win from jaws of defeat

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Nagpur: Former Women's World Champion Tan Zhongyi of China made the worst blunder of the Candidates chess tournament as Vaishali Rameshbabu snatched victory from a losing position to maintain her joint second position in Cyprus on Sunday.

While Ukraine's 36-year-old Anna Muzychuk, who had lost her 2017 women's World Championship final to Zhongyi, played out a quick draw to maintain sole lead collecting 4.5 points, Vaishali's idea of playing patiently paid dividends as the fourth ranked Indian Grandmaster secured her second successive victory.

CHESS

At the halfway mark of the double round-robin tournament, Vaishali is just half a point behind Muzychuk, who played out a 26-move draw with Kazakhstan's reigning three-time women's world blitz champion Bibisara Assaubayeva. The seventh round draw pushed Bibisara to the joint fourth position.

On seeing Zhongyi's blunder that allowed her to win, Vaishali said, "I was just blank. I was, 'Ok, I am winning this game. What is this?' I just feel very bad for her." In the Open section, China's Wei Yi recorded his first victory in the Candidates. Opting the Petrov's Defense with his black pieces, Wei outclassed Russia's Andrey Esipenko in just 30 moves.

The battle between India's 20-year-old Praggnanandhaa R and American world No.3 Fabiano Caruana too ended in a draw. On Pragg's Queen's pawn opening, Caruana chose the Slav defense. With no notable moves from both the players the game ended in a draw by repetition after 38 moves.

The English Opening game between Matthias Bluebaum and Hikaru Nakamura had some chances for the Veteran American against the 28-year-old German. Nakamura played it safe and signed the peace treaty on the 40th move.

FIDE

FINE SHOW: Vaishali Rameshbabu

'Arsenal going through tough period'

London: Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta acknowledged his team is going through its first tough period of the season after being stunned by second-tier Southampton in the FA Cup quarterfinals, two weeks after losing in the final of the English League Cup.

A shocking 2-1 loss at St. Mary's stadium left Arsenal with just the Premier League and Champions League as trophy targets. However, what Arteta wasn't prepared to do was criticize his squad.

ARTETA

"I love my players and what they've done for nine months," he said. "What am I going to do now? Criticize them because we lost a game here in the manner that they tried and the way they are putting their bodies through everything? Some of them probably didn't even have to be here today.

"No, I'm not going to do that. I'm going to defend them more than ever. If someone has to take responsibility that's me and we have the most beautiful period of the season ahead of us. This is the first moment that we have with a certain level of difficulty."

Arsenal play Sporting Lisbon in the Champions League quarterfinals next and have a nine-point lead in the EPL as the club go in search of a first trophy since 2020. AP

Chelsea seek to turn corner

London: Chelsea are hoping that Saturday's 7-0 thrashing of lowly Port Vale in an FA Cup quarterfinal draws a line under a dismal run of form and internal upheaval that has threatened to ruin the season of the big-spending Londoners. Saturday's goal bonanza - albeit against a struggling Port Vale side who look certain to be relegated to the fourth tier of English football soon - at least managed to restore some smiles to the faces of Chelsea's players and fans.

PSV win the Dutch league title

Eindhoven: PSV Eindhoven were crowned Dutch champions on Sunday when their nearest challengers, Feyenoord, failed to win at Volendam. The goalless draw left PSV with an unassailable lead with five matches left. AGENCIES

Pakistan to skip SAFF Women's C'ship in India

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Panaji: The SAFF Women's Football Championship 2026 will be reduced to a six-team affair with Pakistan set to miss out due to strenuous relations with hosts India.

The South Asian Football Confederation (SAFF) had earlier announced that all seven member associations were expected to participate in the championship, "making it one of the premier women's football events in the region." However, according to sources, Pakistan have not confirmed their participation even a week after the deadline ended on March 30.

FOOTBALL

"Pakistan will not participate," a senior official told TOI on Sunday. "There is no official confirmation yet but the deadline that was provided to them for confirmation has already passed. It looks like the (Pak) govt does not want the team to travel to India." The SAFF Women's Championship will be held in Goa from May 25 to June 7.

India's relations with Pakistan on the sports field has been complicated with cricket teams refusing to even shake hands before and after matches. At the T20 World Cup, Pakistan were also involved in a tense 10-day standoff with the International Cricket Council (ICC) over facing India in a blockbuster group-stage clash in Colombo.

The SAFF Championship will now see participation from six countries, two of whom – India and Bangladesh – took part in the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 in Australia. Nepal could have also made it but lost the decisive qualifier on penalties against Uzbekistan, who eventually made it to the last-eight stage.

SC Delhi prevail

SC Delhi secured their first-ever victory in the Indian Super League, defeating Kerala Blasters FC 2-0 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Delhi on Sunday. Mohammed Aimen broke the deadlock in the 36th minute and Matija Babovic scored in stoppage time. This win took them to five points from six matches, while KBFC with one point is placed 13th on the points table.

INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE

Results: SC Delhi 2 (Mohammed Aimen 36, Matija Babovic 90+7) bt Kerala Blasters FC 0; Mumbai City 1 (Lallianzuala Chhangte 73) bt Odisha FC. TNN

TIGER CUP STARTS TODAY

Bengaluru: 56 teams will compete in the Tiger Cup cricket tournament, starting here on Monday. The competition will be played in the U-12, U-14, U-16, and the girls' U-15 categories across four venues in the city. TNN

Paul topples Tiafoe to enter final

Fourth-seeded Tommy Paul out-lasted second-seeded Frances Tiafoe 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (9/7) on Saturday to book a title clash with Roman Burruchaga at the ATP clay court tournament in Houston, Texas.

"I did a good job of playing when I needed to," Paul said after prevailing in a match halted by rain in the second set. "That was an incredible match with Big Foe." Burruchaga, ranked 77th, overpowered friend and fellow Argentinian Thiago Tirante 6-1, 6-1.

TENNIS ROUND-UP

PEGULA IN TITLE MATCH

Defending champion Jessica Pegula advanced to the final of the WTA Charleston Open tournament on Saturday, defeating fourth seed Iva Jovic 6-4, 5-7, 6-3. American top seed Pegula, who has been taken to three sets in each of her four matches in Charleston this week, finally wrapped up the win in 2hr 35min when Jovic pulled a forehand return wide.

World number five Pegula will be chasing her second title of the season on Sunday after her victory in Dubai in Feb.

AFP

TAKE THAT: Tommy Paul

"When I won the first set today I thought 'Oh man, I have such a great chance to not go to three'. I was like 'Maybe I'll get it done in two today'," Pegula told the Tennis Channel. "I'd love some straight sets victories – that would be nice. But a win's a win."

NAVONE TRIUMPHS

Argentinian Mariano Navone won his first ATP Tour title with a three-set victory over Spanish qualifier Daniel Merida in the final of the clay-court event in Bucharest on Sunday. The world number 60 won 6-2, 4-6, 7-5 against Merida.

Results (Semifinals): ATP Houston: Román Burruchaga (Arg) bt Thiago Tirante (Arg) 6-1, 6-1; 4-Tommy Paul (USA) bt 2-Frances Tiafoe (USA) 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (9/7). **WTA Charleston:** 1-Jessica Pegula (USA) bt 4-Iva Jovic (USA) 6-4, 5-7, 6-3; Yuliia Starodubtseva (Ukr) bt 5-Madison Keys (USA) 6-1, 6-4. AFP

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